Going Down Memory Lane and Reminiscing

By
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The following information is what I remember about many things that took place as I grew up on a farm near Corwith, Iowa in the 30’s and 40’s. This was before we had, Yellow No Passing Zone Signs, Right Turn on Red, Yield Signs, Highway Speed Limits, Interstate Highways, Radar, Television, VCR’s, Cell Phones, Air Conditioning, Rural Electricity, FM radio, Computers, Anti Freeze, Automatic Transmissions, Polaroid Cameras, Running Water in Homes on Farms, Indoor Plumbing on Farms, Nylon Hose, Jet Aircraft, Digital Watches, Microwave Ovens, Car Seat Belts, Tubeless Tires, Zippers, Ballpoint Pens, Satellites, Snowmobiles and Divorces.

When a farm neighbor needed help other neighbors pitched in to help. There was never a thought of being paid for this help. It was just a neighborly thing to do. All farm work was done by hand or with the help of horses. An automobile dimmer switch was located on the floorboard of a car just left of the clutch. A starter switch was located between the clutch and brake pedal of car. A car battery was only six volts. All farm tractors had to be cranked by hand to start them.

The following is in no particular order or sequence, only as different things came to mind. I was born in Grinnell, Iowa in 1929, but my youth years were on a farm two and a half miles northeast from the town of Corwith. It was a 160-acre farm owned by a family in Illinois. I attended grade and high school in Corwith, Iowa, graduating from high school in 1947.

After graduation I worked for the Central Iowa Telephone Company at Forest City, Iowa for about one year before joining the Navy. After spending four years in the Navy I attended Iowa State College for two and ½ quarters before dropping out and joining the Iowa Highway Patrol. I was assigned to Post 6 at Spencer, Iowa in 1953 after completing the four-week patrol school in Des Moines. Before I was married we bought a home in West Okoboji in 1955 and still live there. After retiring from the highway patrol I was a recruiter for Northwest Iowa Community College for eight years.

7 ½ years old

Ernest Bonnstetter and James Bonnstetter
Welcome to my memories.

I grew up on a 160-acre farm near Corwith, Iowa. This area had some of the richest cropland in the state of Iowa. The location of the farm was two miles east and a half mile north, east side of the gravel road, from Corwith, Iowa. The house on the farm was a two-story four bedroom home. (This was a better house than the one my great-grandparents lived in during the first year they lived at West Bend, Iowa in 1865. They lived in a sod house for one year on a farm northeast of West Bend.) One of the bedrooms upstairs was where the stair steps came up from downstairs with no railing around the steps. Downstairs there was a back room, kitchen, dining room and a living room. The basement door was off the dining room. The upstairs door was off the living room.

The furnace located in the basement had a large floor grate located between the dining room and the living room. It was on this grate that we dressed for school in the wintertime. When I was in about the fourth grade, the folks had a downstairs bedroom added to the house. This room was heated and the folks used it while the rest of us had to sleep upstairs where there was no heat in the winter. Our house was heated with a corn cob and coal burning kitchen stove and a large furnace located in the basement. In the fall Dad would place cow manure mixed with straw round the perimeter of the foundation of our house. This would pack really tight holding out the cold from entering the house through the basement foundation. When spring came that was one of the first things that had to be removed and hauled out into the fields for fertilizer. In later years we had bales of straw placed around the foundation of the house to keep it warmer in the wintertime. Of course there was no air conditioning in the summer, just open the windows and hope there was a breeze and with no electricity there were no electric fans. We had to fill the furnace with coal (if we could afford it) just before going to bed and then shut off the air to the firebox so it would not burn out by morning. There was no heat to the upstairs so in the winter if you took a glass of water to your bedroom at night and did not drink it all, it would be frozen by morning. In the winter when it was very cold I would fill a hot water bottle with very warm water and take it to bed to keep my feet warm. By morning that hot water bottle would be cold but for a couple of hours it did a great job of keeping your feet warm. One of the first things Dad would do in the mornings would be to open the draft damper on the furnace and put more coal or wood into the firebox of the furnace.
We had linoleum-covered floors in this house for many years. In the 1940’s we saved all our old wool clothing and shipped it to THE OLSON COMPANY. When we built up enough credit we exchanged that credit plus some cash for an all wool carpet for the living room of this house. Boy, was that nice to have a carpet-covered floor in one room of our house.

**Heating the house**

In the fall we would cut wood with a large circle saw mounted on the front of the Farmall F20 tractor. This also cleaned up all the dead branches from trees in our grove. One year we cut up railroad ties for heat. We got these railroad ties from the tracks west of Corwith where the railroad crossed highway 17. (Now named highway 60). We had to load them on a trailer and haul them home before running them through the saw. The gravel imbedded in the railroad ties was very hard on the saw blade teeth. This saw had about a 30-inch circle saw blade mounted on the front of the tractor and powered by a belt from the pulley of the Farmall F20. There were no safety guards around this saw blade. One slip or trip over something and you were in the revolving blade. It was a scary thing to work around. After the old railroad ties were sawed into burnable lengths they were hauled to the south side of the house where they were thrown through a small door into the basement. This is the same door where coal and cobs was thrown for the winter heating of the house. The old railroad ties produced very good heat for our old house. We never considered it old because everyone else who lived on a farm in our area lived under the same conditions.

**Kitchen stove**

In about 1945 we got a fancy kitchen stove, it had both the corncob/coal burning capabilities and two-propane gas burners. This was a really modern type stove for the time. The tall propane tank sat on the south side of the house with the copper tubing running into the basement and up through the floor to the stove. If I remember correctly the cost of a full tank of gas for the stove cost $7.50. There were times when the tank was empty and mother had to just use the corncob part of the cook stove. She could also place small pieces of wood into the firebox of this kitchen stove.

**The Home**

The house was never locked when we would go away. Our family vacationed in Chicago for a week when I was about six years old. After looking for a key but not able to find one, the doors
were left unlocked while we were on the trip. But what was there to steal. No deep freeze, TV or stereo in those days. (We did not get electricity until the early 40’s.) The radio had a 6-volt acid battery to power it. The battery had to be taken to town and charged when the battery power ran low. We did have a Brownie 127 box camera and we took that with us for picture taking on the trip. All our canned food was stored in the cave, which was south of the pump house.

Gypsies
I don’t remember anything ever being stolen from our farm while we lived there. The gypsies would come by in the summer with their covered wagon and team of horses. The wagon had high sides on the box and the gypsies had their goods for sale near the rear of the wagon. They would drop the tailgate of the wagon and you could see the items they had for sale. They would sell thread, cooking utensils and spices. I don’t remember what else they sold. They would take chickens in trade for things they sold. We were told that they would steal chickens but that never happened to us.

After stopping at our farm they would drive their team of horses to the next farm, seated on a wide seat placed on the front sideboards of the wagon. They would work the farms going north in the spring and summer and south in the late summer and fall. The weather was too cold to do any selling and living on the road in the winter months in Iowa.

Chickens
We always raised baby chickens while I was at home. Each spring we would get baby chicks, which were about two days old. The chickens were ordered and delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. The older the baby chicks the more they cost. Three-day-old baby chickens cost more but their death rate at that age was less then the chicks that were just a day old. They would be placed in the brooder house that had a special heating stove to keep the little chicks warm. We always bought extra roosters that were butchered in the summer. We ate many chickens over the years.

In the fall we had to catch all the chickens that had the run of the yards and grove all summer. The project took several evenings work to catch them all. The whole family was involved in this operation, Mother and Dad, myself and JoAnn. This operation started after dark because we had to be able to sneak up on the chickens after they had gone to roost. They would be roosting in the trees and anywhere else that they liked. I would have to climb some of the trees to catch the chickens that were roosting on the lower branches. For others we would use a stick with a wire hook attached to the end that we would use to snag the chickens leg and pull them off of the tree branches. For the rest of the fall and winter the chickens were kept in the chicken house where there was a high fenced in area outside so they could go outside in good weather. Only hens were left by that time. The hens were laying eggs by this time and we would sell the eggs for grocery money. We had butchered all the roosters earlier in the summer.

On Saturday, in the winter months, Dad would require we clean the chicken house. The ammonia coming from the manure under the roosts was a real breath taker and that was always my job of going under the roosts to clean that manure out. I wonder why Dad always did that job on Saturdays. Maybe it had something to do with my being home from school on that day.
Horses and Farming

It was a 160-acre farm that my folks leased from a couple (the Manly’s, sp) that lived in Illinois. We had one team of horses named Duke and Mabel. Duke died of Sleeping Sickness, a disease that killed many farm horses in the 1930’s. My grandfather, J. J. Bonnstetter, had raised Belgium draft horses and had many ribbons that he had won at horse’s shows. The above picture is of the horses, Duke and Mabel. My brother Bill is in the wagon. We were getting ready to go to the fields that had been harvested with the mounted corn picker. There were still ears of corn that had fallen off the corn stocks in those fields. We would search for those ears of corn throw them into this wagon. Later those ears of corn were scooped or elevated into the crib on our farm.

(The picture is on the Bonnstetter home place just east of Corwith. Lester, Ray, Gilbert and Ernest with J. J’s horses)
We had a large box full of them in our pump house that we finally burned in a bonfire. We should have kept them. My dad talked about going to the horse shows and having a bed sheet filled with the ribbons hanging next to their stall of show horses.

My Dad and I

The last of the big horses that we had was a stallion named Colonel. When Duke died Colonel was broke to drive and from then on, Colonel and Mabel were our team of horses. I don’t remember plowing with horses but do remember the horses pulling the cultivator plowing corn. We used a two row but also had a single row cultivator. When Colonel and Mabel were hitched to the manure spreader Colonel did all the pulling. Mabel just walked along for the trip.

Colonel was more fun to ride; he weighed 2,000 pounds, and offered a very smooth ride. We did not have a saddle; so all riding was bareback style. He was a very tame horse. We were very fond of him and hated to get rid of him. Colonel was sold to a farmer near Woden, Iowa. When we drove in that area to visit Uncle Jean and Aunt Esther Foley we always drove by the pasture.
where Colonel was located. He was a beautiful horse. The folks sold him for $600 dollars. That was a lot of money at that time. If they had sold him a couple of years before that they would have received a lot more money. The value of horses kept declining as farmers bought tractors for their agriculture needs.

This picture was taken in 1938 of me with the horse Colonel. Must have been with our Brownie 127 camera.

**Postage & Gas**

Postage stamps to mail a letter were three cents. The cost of mailing a post card was one cent. Gas for a car was less than twenty cents per gallon. For several years I could buy five gallons for a dollar. That was when I was old enough to drive and before that it was even cheaper. While I was in the Navy I could buy two fills of gas for five dollars. $2.50 per tank of gas for my 1950 Chevy car. When I was in grade school the folks would go to the gas station (DX station in Corwith) to get gas, they would pump 10 gallons of gas into the glass cylinder and then placing the hose in your tank and watch the gas go down to the amount of gallons of gas that you wanted. This glass cylinder also showed marks for one-quarter gallons of fuel as well as the full gallon. The attendant at the gas station placed the gas in your car and checked the oil and washed the windshield every time you purchased fuel.

Farmall F20 Tractor

My Dad bought a new tractor, Farmall F20, in the middle 30’s but we could not afford a new binder to cut the oats. So the horse-drawing hitch was removed from the binder and a tractor hitch was manufactured in a welding shop so the tractor could be used to pull the binder. The tractor had steel wheels and that made cultivating corn a very dirty job. When Dad bought rubber tires for this tractor he purchased what we called knobby tires rather then the standard bar type tires. With these tires it was very easy to get stuck in the wet spots in the fields. Note the hand crank on the tractor. Dad had to use that to start the tractor. **Our First Tractor was a 1938 Farmall –F20.**
My job was to drive the tractor while Dad operated the binder. I was in second or third grade at this time. I would hang on to the steering wheel and by stretching my left leg could push in on the clutch. Dad would then place the gearshift into the proper gear. He would then climb on the binder and I would let out on the clutch and off we would go cutting the oats. As I drove the tractor close to the standing oats pulling the binder with the cutting sickle bar and four or five slat rotating boards that pushed the grain into the cutting sickle and then onto a conveyer canvas belt. This canvas belt was about four feet wide and required being patched from time to time by dad. The cut oats would ride on this canvas and then ride up between two more canvas belts into the twine tying mechanism. The operator of the binder, perched on an iron seat high on the back of the binder, had to drop the oat bundles by releasing a foot pedal. This then would drop the six or seven oats bundles that had piled up on the carrier of the binder. The more bundles that this carrier had on it met that it was harder to hold the foot pedal down and not depositing the pile of bundles in the wrong location. This pile of bundles was dropped in line with previously dropped piles of bundles. Then when it was time to shock the oats you had enough bundles handy to make shocks. This also placed the shocks in a row allowing the bundle haulers at threshing time a faster pickup.

Shocking the oats was another hard job, but I was still too young for most of this, there were a couple of times that I had to help and it was a very hot and hard job. The shock was placing two bundles in an upright position forming a tepee with the grain facing upward. The butt end of the bundle placed on the ground. Then adding the additional bundles of oats around this framework forming the shock. If I remember correctly we would use six or seven bundles to a shock with one bundle capping the tepee of bundles to keep the rain out of the middle and off the grain.
When the men shocked oats they would carry a jug of water to the field that was wrapped in an old potato sack which every time you drank some water you would wet the sack. The water evaporating from this wet sack kept the water inside the jug cooler. The jug was then placed under one of the shocks that you had shocked properly. This kept the jug out of the rays of the sun. The main thing was to remember where you placed the jug in the field. Everyone drank out of the same jug while in the fields.

Dad bought one of the first combines when they came out. It was a John Deere Combine with a 6-foot head, used to combine both soybeans and oats by changing the speed of the cylinders. This combine could harvest two rows of soybeans at a time. All Dad had to do was change the speed of the cylinders to convert the combine over to beans from the oats settings.

The oats binder was converted into a windrower for the oats after Dad bought the combine. All he had to do was remove the twine tying equipment and let the oats straw fall in a row on the ground to dry before combining it after it dried out.

**Corn**

Dad planted corn with a two-row planter pulled by a team of horses and the corn was checked. Checked corn is when every 40-inches three kernels were planted and if you did a good job the cornrows lined up in both directions. There was a planter wire that ran the total distance of the field and it had a button every 40 inches that caused the planter to trip and drop three or four kernels of corn, depending on the settings, each time the wire button ran through the planter. If the wire was not pulled uniformly each time, as it was moved to the next two rows, then the cross rows were off, making it hard to cultivate when you tried to cross plow. You could plow out many hills of corn when that happened. The last cultivating of the year had to be made in the direction that we would pick the corn. This was called “laying by the corn”. Otherwise the tractor with the picker mounted on it would bounce up and down as it crossed every row. The same thing if the farmer were picking by hand, it would be harder for the horses to pull the wagon over those ridges.

**Preparing the corn field to plow**

After the corn was harvested and the stocks were left standing making plowing a corn field very messy. About as many corn stocks would be showing after plowing the field as before plowing. Dad had a section of railroad track that had to be about 20 feet long. He had a cable attached to each end of the railroad track with a clevis attached to the middle of this cable for pulling this
rail behind his tractor. This operation would break off many of the corn stocks especially if he did this operation after the ground and the stocks were frozen. When he plowed the stock ground the stocks would be turned under the black soil to rot away and make good fertilizer. He also used this method when preparing the cornfield for the next year’s oats crop. Today a farmer uses a stock chopper for this operation.

The Tractor
I was old enough to drive the tractor, which was a Farmall F20, and plow corn but had a hard time putting the cultivator in the ground the first few years that I was old enough. It was very rough, bouncing up and down on the tractor when you were crossing the corn. Every row had a rut caused by the cultivator from plowing the other direction and all you did was bounce all day long. It was much worse when we got rubber tires on the tractor and that was when I really could operate it. When we had only steel wheels, the dirt blowing from the wheels was terrible. Most of my driving of the tractor was done with the rubber tires on it. In the late 30’s or early 1940 Dad had the steel wheel lugs cut off with a cutting torch and a rim welded on to hold the new rubber tires. To start the tractor it had to be cranked by hand and we had to be home before dark because there were no lights on the tractor. There wasn’t such a thing as an electric starter on the Farmall F20. If you used the tractor in the winter, after starting it, water had to be added to the radiator. You never placed the water in the radiator before starting it in the winter. The water would freeze in the cold motor and not drain out properly if you could not get it started.

When I was in Junior high Dad overhauled the F20 tractor in the pump house on the farm. I did not have the opportunity to help. But I can remember he had the engine in small parts. The pistons were out and he replaced the rings on them and what else I had no idea. It took him some time that winter to get it overhauled but the tractor worked very well after the overhaul was completed.

Cultivating Corn
While in high school I had the job of cultivating corn one day. I had been on a rather late date the night before. The morning plowing went well and after coming to the house to gas up and eat dinner (evening meal was supper) I went back to the field and made a couple of rounds and I was getting tired. I laid down on the ground in the shade of the tractor with the engine still running and slept most of the afternoon away. I thought maybe a short nap would be good but it ended up being about a three-hour nap. Dad was more then a little unhappy with me when I arrived home that evening from the days cultivating. No more late dates while fieldwork had to be done the next day. Another thing about that tractor! It seems that we never had a store bought muffler. What we had was a section of rain gutter pipe sticking up from the hood where the muffler should have been. That made the tractor engine nose very loud but it got the fumes up over our head as we drove it in the field.

A few farmers had an umbrella for their tractors we did not, (other then once), you just cooked in the sun as you drove the tractor across the fields. But you always wore a straw hat while working in the fields. In the one old picture of Dad and his new combine he had an umbrella mounted on the tractor. That was a short-lived operation because I never got to drive the tractor with an umbrella mounted on it.
Every summer we had to go into the cornfields and hoe the cockleburs out of the field. It seemed that every field had patches of burs that we could never kill. Some of the time we were able to pull the cockleburs by hand. Either way was a lot of work. Working in tall corn there was never any wind to help keep you cool.
There were no sprays to kill weeds just hoe or pull them.

**Corn fields**

![Image](image1.jpg)

(Bill, Jo Ann and me)

After Dad had purchased a mounted corn picker for our Farmall F20 there was still plenty of work. We would have the horses pull a wagon in the harvested cornfields. We kids would walk between a couple of rows of corn stocks looking for ears of corn that had fallen off the corn stocks or dropped on the ground at harvest time. These were tossed into the wagon and later elevated into the corncrib and stored with the rest of the corn.
Grinding feed for the cattle
When the cattle needed ground feed Mother would telephone the feed grinder man. This was Elmer Marr in Corwith. In the next couple days the truck would arrive at our farm. Dad would have about ¾ of a wagon loaded with ear corn with the rest of the wagon filled with oats (Door to left of center open top door is where we stored the ground grain.) The guy (Elmer Marr) that came to grind the feed had a truck chassis with a large feed grinder mounted on it. He would back his truck up in front of our barn and extend an auger from the grinder into our feed bin in the barn. Next we would back up the wagon loaded with grain up to the hopper of the grinder. As the grain from this wagon was scooped off into the hopper of the grinder it became mixed. The ground mixture was augured into our barn storage bin. This ground mixed grain was feed to the horses and cows and hogs.

We would grind oats only and use it to feed the hogs. We would pour water into a 50-gallon barrel and then pour in (maybe 5-10 bushel) of oats into the barrel of water. Stir it up and then let it soak over night. We called this mixture MASH. This was then feed to the hogs, in a trough, the next day. They loved it.

My last summer at home after graduation:
It was a very hot summer and I slept out doors under the trees that were located in the yard south of our farmhouse. It was too hot to sleep in my bedroom in the house. When there was no breeze at night the mosquitoes were terrible. I then had to sleep with my head under a sheet. One morning it was getting light and I was already dressed when dad came out the back door of the house. I had just sat down on my hammock where I was to sleep for a while. (The hammock consisted of three sections of front seats of old cars. There were two ropes under the seats and tied to trees which allowed the end section to tilt up and give your head some support,) Dad thought I was ready to go to work. In reality I had just arrived home from a late date. We went
to work! I never complained all day but I was pooped when the day’s work was done. From then on I always arrived home by the time the train went by about 1 1/2 miles northwest of our farm. It was a steamer and blew the whistle at every crossing. It showed up very clearly on full moon nights. And the nice part of that clock was there were two trains separated by over two hours. The later one went north at 3:00AM the early one about 1:00AM. I always told the folks that the train had just passed, hoping that they always were thinking it was the early train. I did not know if they even knew about the 3:00AM train because they were never up that late and outside to see it pass in the moonlight.

In 1946 the trains on the M & St L started using diesel engines rather then the old steam engines to pull the railroad cars.

**Rocks in the field**
There were two different locations on our farm that had large rocks located just below the surface. The only way they could be removed was to dig around the rock and then place a stick or two of dynamite under them and blow them into small pieces. Sometimes it worked better than other times. By the time I was old enough to help all I got to do was the digging and the picking up of the rocks. After Dad blew the rocks’ we then had to load the smaller rocks on a stone boat and haul them to a location in the fence line near the edge of our farm. The stone boat was a flat steel plate with sides and rounded front end that the horses would pull with the rocks loaded on it. Dad was very cautious with that dynamite.

We had a relative, Irvin Bonnstetter, in the West Bend area and he was blown up and killed while using dynamite. After placing the dynamite sticks under a rock Irvin attached the wires leading from the battery to the dynamite. The only problem was he forgot to disconnect the battery from the other end of the wires. The dynamite was ignited and blew up in his face.

**Farmall B**

(Jo Ann and the Farmall B tractor parked north of pump house.)
The folks bought an International “B” tractor in about 1946 or early 1947. It was a great tractor to operate. It had an electric starter, no more cranking unless the battery ran down. It also had electric lights located on a bar with one light on each side of the hood. We did not have the hydraulic operating system to put the cultivator in the ground but it was very easy to operate manually. Dad bought an 18-inch single bottom moldboard plow that we pulled with this tractor. The Farmall F20 pulled a double bottomed, 16-inch plow. It took a long time to plow a field at 64 inches per round in the field. I got to drive the little Farmall “B”, but the plow never worked very well. It was only good in certain types of soil and it seems that ours was not the proper type most of the time. That plow would not scour very well most of the time that I used it.

Farmall B for transportation
One time when the folks were gone and I had a chance to go to the Kossuth County Fair at Algona with the mechanic from the International Harvester Company in Corwith. The only transportation available to me from the farm was the Farmall B tractor so I could meet him in Corwith for the ride to Algona. I drove it into town and about 11:30 that night drove the tractor home from town. The folks were never the wiser.

Threshing
All farmers signed up with a threshing crew, of which there were several in the Corwith area. You signed up with the other farmers who lived close by your farm. One person owned the threshing machine and power unit. This was a steam engine at first and later they had a tractor for power to the threshing machine. Dad would get up early and do the chores and then drive
his team of horses pulling the bundle rack to where ever they were threshing that day. That farm wife had the responsibility of feeding all the threshing crew on the days when they were doing their crops. What a meal those women prepared. When they had a crew of men to feed and there were so many that they were feed them in shifts. That is where the term “cooking for threshers” comes from. (Referring to a big meal prepared by a housewife.) The farm wives would get together and help each other in preparing the noon meal for the crew of threshers. There were always pies at these meals and plenty of meat and gravy plus all the vegetables, from their gardens, that a person ever wanted.

After completing the harvesting of the oats for a crewmember they would move on to the next farmer in the crew. Everyone helped until the threshing season was finished for all the crew. Each farmer paid the owner of the threshing machine money depending on how many acres of grain they had to harvest. If one farmer had many more acres of oats then others he had to furnish and extra bundle rack with horses and operator for the harvesting of the total group. Some of the crew had to haul bundles from the field to the machine while others had an easier job. There job was to hauled the oats away from the threshing machine, which then required them to scoop the grain from their wagon into a bin in the crib or other storage building. The farmers who had the job of hauling the grain away from the threshing machine had problems the first few days of the threshing season. Their horses, when driven close to the threshing machine would be spooked by the belts and other noises coming from the threshing machine. To load the oats coming from the threshing machine auger the horses had to stand very close to the machine, but not as close as the farmers unloading oats bundles into the machine. If there was room at the threshing site they would back the oats wagon up to the threshing machine. After a while the horses would become accustomed to the noise and the motion and calmed down. The same thing was true for the farmers who were hauling the bundles from the field to the threshing machine. Their horses were spooked because on one side of the threshing machine was the power belt from the tractor which was parked about 40 feet away. The horses pulling the bundle rack to the belt side of the machine had to move in close to that belt and sometimes were a little jumpy the first couple of times in the harvest season. The operator of the powering tractor would slow the motor down to cut down the machine noise when it was time for another wagon full of oats bundles to be pulled up to the threshing machine. The farmer would toss the bundles on to the conveyer, which pulled the bundles into the machine. The bundles were normally thrown one at a time on to the conveyer slats. In the first part of the threshing machine were rotating knives that would cut the twine string that held each bundle of oats. From there the oats bundle went into the machine where the oats shaft was separated from the grain. The oats shaft and chaff were blown out the other end of the machine for the straw stack. The grain was augured into a wagon parked next to the threshing machine.

I was too young to help with the threshing. Once at Uncle Lester Bonnstetter’s farm, when the crew was there, they had the steam engine powering the threshing machine and I got to sit on the driver’s seat of the steam engine and watch from that location. The dirty job connected with threshing was the stacking of the straw. After laying out the location for the stack a man had to keep forming the stack by standing on top of the pile of straw as it grew higher and higher and move the straw into the proper location with a three-tine fork. The guy standing on the threshing machine who controlled the direction that the straw was blown could make the stacking job
easier or harder, but it was still a dirty job. There was a long tube that the loose straw was blown through from the threshing machine that had a hood with a flap over the end of it. The man standing on the threshing machine had a rope that he could pull on the flap located on the bottom of this hood, controlling the direction of the straw being blown on top of the stack. By letting up on this rope the straw would be blown away from the threshing machine. He would try to uniformly have the straw spread evenly in and out over the newly forming stack area as the tube went back and forth over the stack of straw. This long tube went back on forth automatically in an arc, from the threshing machine, over the newly forming stack of straw. The finished stack of straw would be in the shape of an arc and could be quite high.

I remember watching this dirty job but never could climb onto a straw stack because I was too young. The guy stacking the straw stack used a ladder to climb up on to the top of the stack after it got higher. He also needed this ladder to get off the newly formed stack of straw. The first few hours all he had to do was to slide off the stack but later needed the ladder. The straw stacker wore a long sleeved shirt with the collar buttoned and a handkerchief tied around his neck to keep the chaff out of his shirt.

The Watkins Salesman
The Watkins salesman would stop at the site where the crew was threshing oats. This man knew all the farmers and they always tried to pull something on him. Like make his car give him a shock of electricity. Using an old model T coil attached to the battery of his car and the other end to the car frame. When he would touch his car anywhere he would get a shock. It did not hurt but was a surprise you did not want. This salesman had various things for sale. Gum was what the kids wanted but he had spices, salves, patent medicines, items of clothing, kitchen gadgets and thread among the many items for sale that he carried in his car.
Fire in field
(This picture is of the Depot in Corwith, Iowa with the steam engine train coming in from the north)
There was the time when a train steam engine spark caught the oats’ field on fire at Uncle Lester’s farm. (Bonnstetter home place east of Corwith) The tracks ran along the north side of the field. Sparks from the firebox went out the smoke stack of the steam engine igniting the dry oats field. Lester and another farmer plowed a strip of land in the oats field around the fire to contain it. There was a large area of black land after the fire. I don’t know just how many acres of oats were burned, but the oats were just about ready to harvest at the time of the fire. This farm was the old Bonnstetter home place of J. J. Bonnstetter, which Lester had rented from the Insurance Company that owned it. The farm was one-half mile east of Corwith on the north side of the gravel road. My Dad and his brothers and sister grew up on that farm. My grandfather, J. J. Bonnstetter, owned the farm but lost the farm during the depression in the 1920’s. He had bought into a new bank in Corwith and put too much money into it and it failed, causing him to lose the farm.

Peoples State Bank closed in 1924. I had also heard the story that he put money into the sugar beet industry at Mason City and lost money in that venture as well. Uncle Ray told me that story and he should have known.

J. J. Bonnstetter, my grandfather
He was involved in several ventures in the area. He was deeply involved in the Sugar Beet Industry in the Mason City area. In 1919 he and several other local men started a bank in Corwith. The name of the bank was: “PEOPLES STATE BANK”, and John Joseph Bonnstetter was the bank president.

Other officers of this new bank were: F. J. Bush, vice-president, W. L. Monlux, Cashier. It lasted till December of 1924, when it was closed for good. In 1919 these men put up $25,000 to start the bank. That is all the money needed at that time to start a bank in Iowa. The other bank in Corwith the, “FARMERS SAVING BANK” was started in 1908. Mr. Ben Major who was J. J. Bonnstetter’s neighbor was the vice president of this other bank. The members of the board of directors of the “Peoples State Bank” were. J. J. Bonnstetter, F. J. Bush, F. W. Senneff, S. L. Thompson, G. W. Scovell and E. J. Studer. The bank’s attorney was C. R. Wood.

J. J. Bonnstetter was a very active member of the Democratic Party. Because of this he received the appointment to be the postmaster of the Corwith Post Office in March 20, 1935. He was the postmaster all the time that I was in school at Corwith with his retiring in 1947. Once when Grandpa J. J. Bonnstetter was visiting our farm, the folks and I were standing in the front yard
by the house when he noticed a cigarette pack in the bib pocket of my overalls. I would have
been in fifth or sixth grade at the time. My birthday was a few days later and I got an ashtray for
a present from him. That was the end of my smoking days. I have never smoked cigarettes since
then. Funny thing, that was the first and only gift that I ever received from my grandfather.

J. J. Bonnstetter on left.

John Joseph and Ida Bonnstetter on right.
J. J. BONNSTETTER

This is a picture of the J. J. Bonnstetter farm home east of Corwith. Mr. and Mrs. Bonnstetter were early settlers and were prominent in the promotion of the welfare of the community.

Dad (Joe) was a progressive farmer introducing new crops and raising purebred Belgian horses. He also helped to establish co-ops, both oil and elevator, worked with the sugar beet company as a fieldsman and wrote insurance. Mother (Ida) was active in all community affairs and was devoted to her family and home. Her humanitarian qualities endeared her to all. She was always ready to help when called upon in case of sickness and was a mid-wife to many, many families.

This page was purchased by Gilbert and Lelia Bonnstetter, Chicago, Illinois; Raymond and Ethel Bonnstetter, Corwith, Iowa; Lester and Elveria Bonnstetter, Corwith, Iowa; Ernest and Opal Bonnstetter, Corwith, Iowa; and Esther and Jean Foley, Crystal Lake, Iowa.
First Car, 1934 Chevrolet  (this picture is of the 1942 car)
The first car that I remember the folks having was a 1934 Chevrolet two-door car. In the wintertime dad had to drain the water from the radiator every time we finished driving it so the radiator and motor block would not freeze and break. There were times when it was really cold that my dad would burn a shovel full of corn cobs under the engine to warm up the oil so the engine would turn over easier when he tried to start it with the hand crank. Every time we wanted to go somewhere Dad had to crank the car by hand to start it. I cranked the thing a few times but was not strong enough to spin it fast enough to start. You had to hold your thumb along side of your index finger while cranking, in case the engine backfired so it would not break your thumb. When it was cold Dad would start the car before adding the water to the radiator. No use adding the water until you were sure that it would start. When the folks traded in the old 34 Chevrolet at Algona it died about three blocks from the dealership and that is where the dealer took possession of it. Probably ran out of gas, but they never told me that. They did receive a $25.00 trade-in for the old car. We got a new car, a 1942 Chevrolet, four-door model. The folks had to go through the government ration board to buy it. But we did not have
to crank it by hand because it came equipped with a modern electric starter. Also, by then you put anti-freeze in the radiator and the water would not freeze and crack the engine block in the cold winter weather. We were still driving that car when I graduated from high school at Corwith in 1947.

(This picture was taken in the snowdrift just north of our farm driveway on the gravel road)

Picture of the county snowplow in the same area snowdrift in 1936. Car in drift was taken in 1946. This snowdrift was located a couple of hundred feet north of our farm driveway on the gravel road.
Old Corn Crib and Rats
When I was very young we had an old corncrib that the rats loved. We must have had thousands of them. When we would come home from town on a Wednesday or Saturday night as we pulled into our farm driveway the rats would be running in every direction. I remember getting up one morning and having scratch marks on my forehead. Mom thought they were caused by rats in the house and they may well have been. Anyway not long after that we bought rat poison and tried to kill those rats. It wasn’t until the old crib was torn down that we really got rid of them. Dad put up poles on the north side of the old crib and then slid the roof from the north side of the old crib onto those poles. That was our new machine shed to park our implements out of the weather. He did not want to waste one half of a roof. When we had a good crop of watermelon we would bury them in the oats bin in this old crib. It was fun to be able to dig in the bin of oats and find a fresh watermelon well after the growing season was over.

Garden watermelon patch
For several years we had a garden just west of the barn and the road fence. One year we had a terrific watermelon patch. Several watermelons were just about ripe, and if I remember correctly we were going to go to Grinnell to visit Grandpa Gregson for a few days. I looked at those delicious watermelons in that garden and wondered which ones would be ready to eat before we left on the trip. So I got a knife and cut a triangle plug out of the topside in each melon that look like it was ready to eat, which was most of them. When we arrived home after being gone for several days Dad discovered the hole in each melon. The melon crop was ruined because each melon had rotted around the hole I had cut. That was the last time I plugged the melon patch. Come to think of it, we never raised watermelon again. I was very young at this time.

World War II
During World War II we had to use ration stamps to buy gasoline for our car and the farm tractor. There was a sticker that you placed on the corner of your front windshield to show what you qualified for. There were A, B and T stickers for the windshield. We also took our dimes and quarters to school on Fridays and bought savings stamps which when you got your book full you could then get a $25.00 War Bond for $18.75 worth of stamps. $37.50 stamp books would get you a War Bond worth $50.00 at maturity. If we needed a new tire for the car the folks had to go to the ration board and get a permit before they could purchase the tire.

Also during World War II there was a lot of hemp grown around the Britt area. Once during the war everyone at the high school, in Corwith, who wanted to help, was taken by school bus to the hemp fields near Britt to help bundle the hemp. I was a freshman and did not go help that
day. The hemp plant was used to make rope during the war years. We were told not to breathe any smoke from these plants if they caught fire because it was dangerous to inhale. We now use a different name for this same plant, we call it marijuana and you can be arrested for growing it and a lot of people like to smoke it.

West of Algona, south side of highway 18, where the local airport is located now, there was a German Prisoner of War Camp during World War II. It had a high wire fence around it. The local farmers could go there and check out some prisoners to help shock oats or other farm tasks. We never did that but some farmers in the Corwith area did. The prisoners wore shirts and pants that had a large PW printed on the back of them.

**War Time Highway Speed Limit**

The open highway maximum speed limit during the war years was 35 miles per hour. If anyone went around you while you were driving at that speed limit you would honk your horn to warn them that they were unpatriotic. We never drove faster than 35 miles per hour on any trip that we took during that time. Several times we drove to Grinnell to see Grandpa and Grandma Gregson or to Mason City and we never drove faster than 35 miles per hour. We would always go to Mason City, 50 miles away, to buy new school clothes for us kids. This trip would be made a couple of weeks before school started in the fall.

No high school kids drove cars to school. I did have a classmate, Bill Welter, whose grandfather willed Bill his model A Ford car. It was really fancy, had a cloth top and a rumble seat. Only on rare occasions was Bill allowed to drive that car to school even as a senior in high school. No one else ever drove a car to high school. All of our parents only had one car and a single car garage at home.

There was once that Lester Hash Jr. could drive his folk’s car to school. His folks had gone somewhere and Lester had just had an operation so I stayed at his place to do the chores and of course we had to drive their car to school. It was a Model B Ford. By driving to school we had more time for doing the chores and could be home earlier for the evening chores. This was the car that Lester Jr. let me drive to pick up his date for the evening. Bonnie Cockrell lived northeast of Corwith on a farm. It was winter and Lester Jr. had to be at basketball practice so this was the reason he let me do that task. I overshot the driveway to Bonnie’s home and hit the
brakes on the icy road. The car spun around in the road but did not go into the ditch. Her parents saw this happen and were not sure they wanted their daughter to ride with me. She told them that I was a good driver and they allowed her to be taken to Corwith.

There was another time that something happened with Bonnie. She got sick at school and when the bus driver, Harvey Punk, arrived at her parents home near Stilson. He had Keith Nall (sp) and I help her to the house from the bus. So Keith is on one side of Bonnie and I’m on the other half carrying Bonnie up the long lane to the farmhouse. Bonnie’s mother opened the door to the home and screamed at us. (Or Bonnie) We were not expecting that and almost dropped Bonnie and ran for the bus. We did some fast-talking to convince her mother she was just ill.

**Grandpa Gregson’s buick**

Grandpa Leo Gregson, from Grinnell, had a large Buick automobile. It was a four-door and once we were riding west out of Corwith on the blacktop road when I opened the rear door to close it tighter. That is when I found out that a four-door car, where the rear doors opened from the front, should not be opened while the car was moving. The wind did not spring the door or have it pull me out of the car, but I hung on for dear life to that door trying to pull it shut. Grandpa Gregson slowed the car rapidly and this allowed me to get the door closed.

**Blizzard of 1936**

When the wind blown snow piled up in our driveway, we had to scoop it out by hand. There were no tractor loaders with buckets or snow blowers at that time. Farmers had to help open the roads after the blizzards of 1936 and this was done by hand. Hancock County did have a maintainer with a V snowplow in front to open the roads but the drifts were too high for it to do the job at many locations, so local farmers would scoop snow to help. We were lucky that the snow did not pile up too bad in our driveway at the farm. We did have to scoop the snow away from the cattle’s tank so the cattle did not walk over the tank or the fence when we had a lot of snow in the winter months. In the winter of 1936 the snow storms made all roads impassible for cars for several weeks and when we wanted to get groceries we rode in a bobsled pulled by our horses’ Duke and Mabel. The snow was so deep that it covered the telephone lines along the road east of Corwith where we traveled into town. There were times that we traveled in fields and other times were able to drive the horses on the gravel road. It was two and a half miles to town so it was a long afternoon to drive by horse and bobsled into town and get groceries and return home. There were blankets and loose straw in the wagon box and JoAnn and I pulled the blankets over our heads to keep warm. Dad had to drive right by the front door of our neighbor Frank Izzard’s farmhouse and Frank would always come out and talk to my folks. The drifts were too deep on the road in front of his house so we drove in his field. He would have them pick up items from town for his use. I don’t think he ever had to drive his horses into town that winter because everyone going to town from east of Corwith had to drive by the front of his house.

It was in the winter of 1936 that I rode in a bobsled pulled by horses to go to school. Another kid threw my lunch out and I had to run back in the snow to get it. For some reason I still remember that, it happened just one mile south of our farm home on the gravel road. I must have been in second grade at the time.
School Teachers
Our second grade school teacher, Miss Jane McDowell, was very strict when it came to the language that we used at school. If she caught any kid cussing that kid had their mouth washed out with soap. That kid never cussed again, at least not in front of her. For other disciplinary problems she would use the ruler. A student would get at least one swat on their hand, which they had to hold out in front of her. I got the ruler once, but I have forgotten what I did wrong. When she used the ruler we acted like it really hurt but it did not. We did not tell our folks that we had ever gotten in trouble at school. If we did there would have been more punishment at home. Miss McDowell was one of the best teachers that we had in grade school. In junior high we had Miss Wilson as a teacher. She had taught my folks when they were in school. She also was an exceptionally good teacher, strict but well liked by everyone.

Marbles at School
All the grade school boys carried marbles to school while we were in the lower grades. We carried them in a cloth bag with a drawstring to keep the marbles safe. If a marble dropped on the classroom floor while class was going on it belonged to the teacher. Never to be seen again by that student!

Before and after school and at our recess we played marbles. We would place marbles in a large circle that we drew in the dirt (equal numbers by each player). Then we drew a line about 10 feet from the circle. We would stand behind the circle and toss a marble to that line. Whoever had their marble the closest to that line would shoot first from that line toward the circle full of marbles. The object was to hit a marble in the circle hard enough to knock it out of the circle. That marble then belonged to that person.

You had to shoot your shooter by holding your hand and the marble in a position called ‘knuckles’. You made a fist with your hand and placed the marble you were to shoot above your index finger with your thumb behind the marble. Your thumb supplied the force to the your shooter. After a little a little practice you become very proficient in the accuracy with that marble.
Running water?
We did not have running water or electricity on the farm while I was in grade school. We had a pump located over the well about 50 feet from the back door of the house. In this picture you see the pump and the building where the gas engine was located to power the pump when the tank needed water. This platform and pump was later lowered about five feet and a hole was made in the side of the cement holding tank to pump the water into it. It was on this holding tank roof that the barrel for bath water was placed. (Talk about that later). Every night we had to bring in a pail of water that was place in a back room. In the winter it was frozen with a thick crust of ice by morning. There was a long handled dipper from which everyone drank water. It always was hanging in the bucket except in the winter nights when if left in the bucket it would be frozen tight by morning because there was no heat in that room. We had to chip a hole in the frozen water in the pail to get water to drink the next morning. We never have running water in that house before I graduated from high school in 1947. I think the folks moved into town before Mother had running water
Wash Day
The reservoir on the stove was filled with water so warm water could be used for baths and cooking. On washday the large copper boiler was placed on the stove and filled with water to be heated up for the washing machine, this was in addition to the reservoir full of warm water in the stove. We had a Maytag washing machine with the square tub and wringer, which was powered with a small gas engine. It was a great day when we finally got electricity in about the summer of 1941 and could buy an electric motor for the washing machine. We did not buy a new washing machine just an electric motor for the old machine. The Maytag washing machine was located in the pump house. That was good for the summer but rather cold in the winter. It had to be located in an outside shed because of the gas engine that operated it. When we had the electric motor installed on it, we moved it into the back room of the house for the winter months. The washed clothes were hung on the clotheslines, in the yard, south of the house. In really cold weather the wet clothes were hung on a wooden rack placed over the floor furnace grate in our living room to dry. There were many times in the winter when the clothes hanging on the clothesline in the yard would be frozen stiff as a board. They would then be taken into the house and placed over the furnace on the clothes rack to complete the drying process. At least that put a little moisture into the home.

Ironing clothes
Ironing clothes before electricity required the iron to be placed on the hot stove to get hot and Mother would then attach the wooden handle with metal claws to the hot iron and start ironing clothes. When that iron cooled she would then place that iron back on the stove and remove the handle from it. Then she placed the handle on another hot iron and continued ironing. She always had two irons on the stove getting hot. The kitchen was very warm in the summer time when the washing and ironing had to be done. But then it was always warm in the summer time because we also used the stove to cook. In fact the whole house was hot all summer long. It was very difficult to sleep at night on hot nights. No fans and if the wind was not blowing there was not a breath of fresh air in the bed room.
The Cistern
Ernest, Bernice and Ken Gregson, maybe Willard is the other adult sitting on the cistern cover south side of the house.

A cistern is a large cemented hole in the ground about 10-12 feet deep and about five to six feet in diameter. We had a cement cover over this underground cement tank. Our cistern was located on the south side of the house to catch the rainwater off the roof. The eves of the house had a downspout running into this cistern. The rainwater was used for washing clothes because it was soft water and made more suds. Homemade lye soap was used for washing clothes. We had a small hand operated pump located in the back room so we could pump water from the cistern into a sink to wash with. This pump had to be primed before you could get any water from the cistern. You never drank the water from that pump. Rainwater is soft water and was used in the washing machine because it allowed the soap to work better. The soap was home made from the lard of the hogs that we would butcher every year.

Aladdin Lamps
For light at night we used kerosene lamps. But we did have a couple of Aladdin lamps that was a treat when they were lighted. When we had company, we had another deluxe Aladdin lamp that we used. The Aladdin lamps used white gas (unleaded) in them and we had to pump air into the fuel tank of these lamps to keep pressure for the fuel to feed the asbestos mantel. The deluxe Aladdin lamp hung on the north wall of
our living room and had two mantles mounted on it giving us twice as much light as the regular Aladden. When a person had the flame too high, the asbestos mantel would turn black and cut down on the amount of light transmitted. To fix this a person would lower the flame and then sprinkle salt over the mantel that would dissipate the black part of the mantel again giving more light.

**Chores**
If we did not get the chores done before dark we had to carry a kerosene lantern so see by. We would hang it on a board sticking out from the wall in the barn while we milked the cows at night. It’s a wonder we did not burn the barn down. We insulated the wall of the barn where the cows were milked. By placing boards on the wall of that area and then stuffing straw behind the boards we kept the wind from blowing through the cracks. With the heat of the animals that area was comfortable. There was also a ceiling in that part of the barn covered with hay or straw and the center section of the barn was full of hay most of the time.

**The Water Tank**
When we filled the cattle water tank with water we had to start a gas engine (John Deere), which was water-cooled, so it had to be drained in cold weather. We pumped water into a cement holding tank located by the pump and from there the water went by gravity underground to the cattle tank located by the barn.

One summer day when it was very hot I went for a swim in this horse tank. Very refreshing! Could hardly drown because the tank was only about three feet deep.

On the top of the cement holding tank, which was covered with wood, Dad placed a 50-gallon iron barrel. It had one end cut out so we would fill it with water in the summer time. This barrel full of water would heat up in the summer, by the rays of the sun, so by evening we had warm water to take a shower. There was a long galvanized pipe running from this barrel into the pump house and that was where we took our showers with the wastewater draining through the wooden floor of the pump house. In the winter we did not have the convenience of a shower. Cloudy days were a problem even in the summer and days that we did not fill the barrel until later in the day. As far as that goes most of the showers were taken with very cool water. You always had to save enough water for the next person’s shower.

**Tank Heater for the cattle tank**
In the winter we had a tank heater placed in the cattle tank. It was an iron rectangular L shaped tube that one end allowed corncobs or wood to be placed into this tube. The open end was placed near the edge of the water tank so we had access to the opening. The other end which was under water had a chimney so when the door was closed after starting the corncobs or wood on fire the smoke would exit through the chimney causing the water tank to heat up enough to thaw the frozen ice that formed over the water in the tank. Now the cattle were able to have a drink of water.

**Outhouse**
The toilet (outhouse) was a different matter. It was located further away from the house. There
was a path in the snow to the door and you always closed the door in the wintertime. Who wants to sit on a board covered with snow? We had a two-hole outhouse with both being the same size. We had one neighbor that had a three-hole outhouse, two large and one child size hole. Toilet paper was a Sears & Roebuck or Montgomery Wards catalog unless we bought a case of peaches. Then we had a treat, using the paper in which each peach was wrapped. I always looked forward to Mom buying fresh peaches. The glossy pages of the catalogs were not very pleasant to use after the other pages ran out. Using catalogs in such a fashion always made for reading material in the outhouse.

The folks talked about a friend’s wife who was seated in their outhouse doing her thing early one morning. She had the door open, as it was a nice warm morning. As she was sitting there a man walked by the door. It was a neighbor who had come over to help her husband that day. All she could do was say, “Good morning”. He said, “Same to you”, and kept on walking. After that she closed the door even in nice warm weather while sitting in the outhouse.

While I was at home on the farm we never had an indoor toilet. It was a treat to go to Grandpa Bonnstetter’s home in Corwith because he had an indoor bathroom and running water. Some farmers had the outhouse located over a hole about five feet deep. Then when the hole got full, they just moved the house to another hole, throwing dirt over the first one. We did not have that and once a year we had to remove the board from the back of the outhouse and scoop everything into the manure spreader and haul it out into the fields. I also hated that job.

School Hot Lunch
When I was in fifth grade we had a real treat, the school had a hot dish every noon. It was a bowl of soup and it cost five cents a day. We paid the twenty-five cents at the beginning of each week. This was the beginning of the Hot Lunch Program in Iowa, as we know it now. Before that we had to take our lunch to school. Jelly sandwiches were common with the kids. An apple or an orange was a treat. I can remember eating my lunch in the school lunchroom one day when a classmate was eating his. We sat on the floor and ate our lunches. He had a jelly sandwich and I was eating a pork and bean sandwich. I would have given anything to trade sandwiches with him. I still remember that to this day, so I don’t think I had many jelly sandwiches for school lunches.

First Job
When I was in seventh grade I got a job at Mullins Hi-bred Seed Corn Company, located Northwest of Corwith. My job was hoeing corn out of the beans in the bean field. My pay was fifteen cents per hour and first paycheck was for something like $5.40 and my folk’s thought that was great. That was good money for that time. We would meet at the Mullins Hi-bred Seed Corn Company building in Corwith and ride a trailer pulled behind a tractor from there to the farm fields of the Mullins farm. The farm is still owned by the Mullins family and farmed today by Jim Mullins.

At this time the son of our neighbor, Olie Campbell, who was older than I, got a job at my Uncle Jean Foley’s at Woden, Iowa. He was still in high school and his job was to do the chores on
Jean’s farm. His pay was board and room and $15.00 per month. There were men who worked for farmers, a few years before this, for one dollar a day. Olie graduated from Crystal Lake high school and then joined the navy. He later was a fireman for the railroad out of Mason City, IA.

**Detasseling Crew for Mullins Hi-bred Seed Corn Company in 1944**

When I was in eighth grade, I detasseled corn for Mullins Hi-bred Seed Corn Company of Corwith. What a fun job! In the mornings the corn was wet from the dew and you got wet from head to foot. In the afternoons it was hot but at least you were dry, unless it had rained the night before or there were buggy tassels and then it was a mess. We would meet at the plant in Corwith and ride a flat bed wagon towed by a farm tractor to the fields located about two miles northwest of Corwith. It was good money for that time and my age, something like 30 cents an hour.
In later years Mr. John Mullins had motor driven carts that could haul eight detasselers. They were three wheelers powered with a gas engine mounted above the front wheel. This is the machine that I operated for Mullins Hybrid Seed Corn Company when I was a freshman in high school. 8 girls from Wesley did the detasseling from this machine. We traveled very slowly through the fields as they pulled the tassels from the corn stocks. Each girl had one row of corn to pull the tassels from. Later after most of the tassels had been pulled we would go over the fields again for later developing corn tassels. One girl would take care of two rows of corn this time.

My Allowance
My allowance was 20 cents a week when I was in grade school and that had to last for both of the nights we went to town each week. We went to town on Wednesday and Saturday nights. The main street of Corwith would be packed with cars. If we arrived late Dad would have to park on a side street. Then our folks would have to find a friend who had arrived in town early enough to have a good parking spot on main street. They would climb into their car and spend the evening talking with them and other people who would stop by that car. One night I had the opportunity to order an ice cream sundae at the Welter Drug Store and found out it took most of my whole week allowance. It cost me 15 cents. I did not do that again. Videl Bonnstetter (Lee Day) was in the old Welter Drug Store and I ordered the ice cream sundae with him. I was really a big shot doing that with someone in high school. Ice cream cones and candy bars and bottles of pop were five cents each at that time.

Shoes:
I can remember going to grade school with holes in the soles of my shoes. I would place a piece of cardboard inside the shoe so my foot and sock would have a little protection from the elements. I would also pull down the back of my socks so the hole would not show where my shoe had worn a hole in the sock. But I was not the only kid that had that problem so it wasn’t that bad. I don’t think I was scared for life because of it. In the winter months we always wore overshoes over our shoes when going to school.
Videl

The picture is of J. J. Bonnstetter and one of the beet weeders from Mexico. It is possible the young child is Lee Day. Named Videl later.

Videl Bonnstetter, whose real name was Lee Day, was a young lad who with his folks weeded the beet fields for my grandfather, J. J. Bonnstetter. My uncle Lester Bonnstetter and his wife Elveria took a liking to the family and the young boy and he stayed with them when his folks returned to Mexico from the summer job in Iowa. They raised him as their own son, and how they came up with the name of Videl I don’t know. When Videl joined the army in World War II he had to find his real name. Lester thought that Lee was his brother’s name, but it satisfied the army so he is known as Lee Day to this day. He and his wife moved to Florida in the late 1980’s.
Welter Drug Store
Rufus Welter owned and operated the Welter Drug Store on the main street in Corwith. He had a beautiful ice cream counter and we could order an ice cream cone or a carbonated drink. You could have that carbonated drink turned into a PHOSPHATE drink. You would order a Cherry Phosphate drink. Rufus would add a couple of drops of something (phosphoric acid) from another glass container into your cherry coke drink and then you had a cherry phosphate drink. It was nothing more then phosphoric acid added to the carbonated drink and then called a phosphate. Never knew that for some time.

Fishing Trip
Once I rode my bike with fishing pole in hand a mile and a half south and one mile west to where the Boone River crossed the gravel road to go fishing. The only problem I had was that I fell into the river. That ended the fishing for the day, and by the time that I had ridden my bike home my clothes had dried and I never told my folks what had happened. I didn’t catch any fish either.

I also fished just east of Corwith where the Boone River went by the city dump. It was at this location the bums and hobos stayed. They would sleep and eat under the railroad bridge by the river. It was near this location that I was baptized before joining the First Baptist Church at Corwith. The Boone River at that location was about three to four feet deep and the whole congregation gathered on the west bank of the river and the minister waded into the river where I was submerged by the minister. We also had a baptismal tank in our church, which was used in cold weather. On the opposite bank of the river where I was baptized was the town dump. No one ever gave that a thought that the river could have been contaminated from that dump. Most of the things dumped there was old wire and other solid objects from the local farms.

Pigeons
Uncle Ken Gregson, and my Dad caught pigeons one year for a shooting club in Missouri. The price received for each pigeon was about ten cents. My job was to climb up into the cupolas of the cribs and barns and catch the pigeons, lock their wings and drop them down to one of the men. We would put them in wooden chicken crates to transport them. Then later they were shipped to Missouri to the shooting club. I was a freshman in high school at this time. It was on one of these nights that we stopped by the Corwith schoolhouse while a basketball game was being played. That was the first time that I had seen a high school basketball game. We got in free because it was past half time and no charge.
Wednesday and Saturday Nights
When I was in grade school almost all farmers went to town every Wednesday and Saturday night. Wednesday nights the local band played at the bandstand. The bandstand was located just to the right of the second building on your left in this picture of the main business section of Corwith in the 1940’s. (J. J. Bonnstetter’s car is the first car to the left in this picture.) (The first car on the right is Lester Hash Sr. car. That is also Mr. Hash Sr. walking to his car.) The band consisted of people from the community and local high school students. You had to get into town early so you could park your car in front of the bandstand. We hardly ever were so lucky. The farm chores always took too long to do. People would sit in the cars and talk, or stand on the sidewalks talking in groups. I guess that was the way everyone caught up on the local news. We kids had fun running around the streets of Corwith. One night we were in town and Dad drove all the way home before discovering that we had left Bill in town. We had to drive back to town to find him. JoAnn, Bill and I always slept on the trip home from town. Jo Ann and I must have gotten in the car earlier and been asleep when the folks started for home.

It was on Saturday night when we sold the eggs and cream. We would drop the can of cream off at the creamery the very first thing on arriving in town. Taking the crate of eggs to the grocery store (Joe Kobia’s, Jack Sprat Grocery) was the next item on the agenda. Later in the evening we would stop at the place we left the cream and it would have been tested and weighed by then and we would get cash for it. The eggs had to be candled before the store would pay you money for them. They would hold each egg over a light bulb to see if a little chick had not started to grow inside the shell. If there were dark spots that egg would be thrown away. Mother would use the
cream and egg money to pay for the groceries and try to have a little money left over. You would go to the grocery store and give the clerk your order and they would go to the shelves and get your order. No self service in those days. You stood at the counter with your order while the clerk gathered the items from the shelves of the grocery store.

In the early 40’s we had a business in Corwith that operated two bowling lanes. (Harvey Hankins later had his grocery store in this building in the 50’s.) If I was lucky I would be able to “set pins” for bowlers. I received 10 cents a game to set pins. This gave me a little spending money. There did not have automatic pin setting machines at that time.

Mr. Punk and School Bus
Harvey Punk was our bus driver. He is the only bus driver I had while attending school at Corwith. In the winter of 1936 the ride to school was by sled. The snow was so deep that the regular school buses or any motor vehicles could not get anywhere on the roads. It was only a couple of times that I had to ride to school in the sled pulled by a team of horses. The rest of the time was in the regular school bus driven by Harvey Punk. When Harvey bought a new bus all he would buy was the chassis and then had the old bus body installed on it. That was the way all the bus owners did it. The school owned the body of the bus and the drivers owned the chassis. There was a large bus and storage building near the rear of the school building. Also back of the school on the opposite side was the coal storage area. The coal storage area was attached to the school building. Coal had to be scooped into the bins by hand to be burned later in the school building furnace. The furnace room is where the teachers went to smoke their cigarettes. Some high school students also did a little smoking in this area.

A HORSE DRAWN CORWITH BUS: Driver John Mullins. (back row from left)
The horse drawn school buses had been placed in retirement by the time I attended school. Our bus drivers each had two routes before school and after school. So they had to load up twice at the school after school and unload twice each morning. I had to wait for the second route and
then ride the bus for more then half an hour before getting home. Occasionally after school, I would catch the first bus route driven by one of the other drivers. His route came within one half a mile of our country home and the driver would let me out and I would walk home from there. I could be home about 30 minutes to 45 minutes ahead of the bus on my regular route. That gave me more time to listen to “The Lone Ranger” and “Jack Armstrong the All American Boy” and “The Shadow” on the radio before doing the chores. Not all of them each afternoon but at least one.

When I was young we had no electricity at our rural home and when we wanted to play our radio we had to have a 6-volt battery for a power supply. The battery was a regular 6-volt car battery. We had to take the battery to town to get it charged when the battery power got low. One time we were returning from our Saturday night trip to town with the freshly charged battery on the floor of the rear seat of our old 34 Chevrolet car. Somehow I kicked the battery over on its side while coming home from town that night. Dad checked to see if any of the liquid had drained out. Well, battery acid creates a gas and when he lit a match to look into one of the plugs the thing blew up and he got some acid in his eyes. I did not catch the devil too bad because what he did with the match was worse. We called the doctor, Dr. Wally, and he had him wash his eyes out with water and everything turned out OK.

My Billy Goat
Dad had a large billy goat that had the run of the farm when I was quite young. I would try to ride this goat but every time I got on him he would head for a fence and rub me off onto the ground. Dad had cut off the tip of his horns so at least when he would butt you his horns had blunt ends. I could harness him up to my little red wagon and he would pull me in the wagon around the farm site. Sometimes not to where I wanted to go but it was fun. Charlie Campbell, our neighbor across the road from our farm, paid me a dime once to harness up the goat and have it pull my wagon over to his farm to show this animal to his visiting company.

Evening meal at the Childers Farm:
Jay and Winnie Childers lived on an 80-acre farm just to the south of our farm. Their farmhouse was 2 mile from ours. They invited our family to an evening meal. In Iowa farm land the evening meal was called supper. The noon meal was called dinner. Anyway we had the best tasting meat that night. Little round steaks and they were so tender. It was only after we had eaten our dinner that Jay and Winnie told us that we had been eating ROCKY MOUNTAIN OYSTERS. They thought it was a good joke on the folks but everyone enjoyed the meat. If you know your parts of hog that was the day that Jay had castrated his hogs and we were eating that part. The way that Winnie had prepared them they were good. They had moved to Iowa from Missouri and she had cooked them before. It’s all in the preparation.

Knocked out
One Saturday in the middle of winter we had to go to town in the afternoon and a group of kids, (the Francis boys and some others) and I were sliding down the ramp at the grain elevator by the railroad tracks in Corwith. We used sleds or what ever we had and sliding down a snow-covered slope on a metal shovel was a lot of fun. I was on a shovel and either Clare or Skip Francis was
hanging onto the handle when he fell down and landed on my head. That was the other time that I was knocked out cold. Regained consciousness a short time later and never did tell the folks about being knocked out.

**Basketball**

I did not go out for basketball as a freshman. When I was a sophomore in high school the basketball coach observed a group of us playing basketball in the gym one noon hour. The coach had some players that had never played before dress for the second team game. I started that game and played the whole game, after which I changed uniforms for the first team and played in the last quarter of that game. The next week I played on the second team again and dressed for the first team and again got into that game. Those were the only times I played on the second team while in high school, from then on it was the first team. Our gym was so small that you could shoot the ball from the opposite free throw line but you would hit the ceiling so that did not work either. We also had a steam pipe that was head high located on the wall, about even with the free throw line, in the southwest corner of the gym. We knew just when to duck our head to miss it but it caused visiting team all kinds of problems.

Our basketball team was not very good when I was a senior. In one of my last ball games played for Corwith at the Livermore school, I fouled out in the last quarter. I went to our bench and sat down. The Livermore coach went to the score table and then came over to our bench and put me back in to finish the rest of the game. He came into our locker room after the game and congratulated me on having played a excellent game. I scored 17 of our total 35 points scored that night by our team. Their team went on to the State tournament. I should have made two more points but missed an easy lay-up. Their players all grew a beard that season not shaving until they lost their first game. They had a very good team that year.

That is me second row on the left. I was a junior when this team won the Hancock County Basketball Tournament that year. Lester Hash made a basket as the final horn sounded and that was the winning basket.
Uncle Ray’s Pony
Uncle Ray Bonnstetter owned a pony and he let me break it to ride. One afternoon I was taking a canvas bag full of drinking water to a neighbor who was working in a field south of our farm. The bag allowed the water to evaporate slowly and that kept the water cool. The strap holding the bag slid off my shoulder and the cold bag hit the pony on the side and off he went out of control. The pony bucked and went into the ditch from the gravel road that we were traveling on. As the pony went into the ditch I flew into the air landing on my left shoulder breaking my collarbone and getting knocked out. The only thing good about it was that I didn’t have to milk the cows that night, but that only lasted a couple of nights. I was knocked out and came to only after walking with my folks back to the farmhouse. This all happened a short distance south of our home on the gravel road in front of the house. I did not remember anything from the time I went flying into the air until standing in the front yard of the farmhouse. A horse rider I will never be, at least not without a saddle.

Telephone
The other way of getting news was on the party line telephone. Our dry battery operated telephone hung on the south wall of the kitchen near the stove and the kitchen table. The ringing of the telephone bell did not necessarily alert you to someone calling you. Each person on your line had a different sequence of long or short rings for them. When the phone rang for a neighbor that you knew you always picked up the receiver and listened. You would cover the mouthpiece of the phone with your hand if there were conversations in the kitchen at that time. Then the people on the phone could not hear the background conversation. To talk into the phone you had to stand up and speak directly into the mouthpiece, which was permanently attached to the phone on the wall. Other people could hear the click when you removed the receiver from the hook and would know that other people were listening in on their conversation. When you wanted to call someone, you would crank the phone to contact the operator in Corwith. There was a small crank located on the right side of the wooden phone box which you would turn fast which caused an electrical charge to drop a little door under our line plug at the central office in Corwith. The operator would then plug in a cord to that line and announce, “Number Please.” The operator would then take the other end of the cord and plug it into the proper line. Then she pressed a switch causing long or short rings of the phones on that line making the proper number of long and short rings for the residence you were calling. If there was a really important message to get out you called the telephone operator and had the operator put out a general ring. I don’t remember what it was, but it was so many longs and so many shorts rings of the bell. When you heard this call it was a requirement that you pick up the receiver and listen to the message. For
a fee you could request a general ring for any line or for all the lines for our rural area from the Corwith exchange. The general ring was to advertise farm sales, weddings and anything else that needed advertising. Jackie Cashmere, our cousin who lived in Corwith was one of the operators at the telephone exchange.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
We attended the First Baptist Church in Corwith, which had church services on Sunday mornings and also Sunday evenings. We never missed a church service or Sunday school class. There also was a prayer meeting on Thursday night that my Mother and I would attend. Dad stayed home for that one and took care of the younger kids. Sunday evenings before the church service started we had Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF).

In 1946 we needed a new minister at First Baptist. A couple ministers came and delivered sermons to the congregation. One of these ministers had three daughters. Well, there were several young high school age guys who were members of the church. Lester Hash, Leonard Meyers, Lyle Meyers, Roland Hankins, Verl Hankins, Lesley Lawerence and myself. We only had a couple of younger girls in our church that were near our age. So when it came time to vote on this minister all of us boys were seated together and we talked about the possibility of having a new minister with three daughters and that sounded like a very good idea. We all voted for O. R. Roberts and his three daughters. He was voted in and we had the three girls in our church.
One night when we were having MYF at the parsonage I pointed to a picture of a woman on the wall. There were two pictures, one of Rev. O. R. Roberts and the other a woman. I asked who was the woman. One of the girls said, “That’s our father and his first wife”. That started the tongue’s waging as we thought we had a minister who had been married twice. The girls were right. That was his first wife and also his present wife. They were still married. I’ll bet they laughed about that one for a long time.

**Seed Corn**
Picking corn was another big job at our farm. In the fall when a farmer was picking corn by hand and he came across a large ear of corn, that ear went into a box on the side of the wagon and when they got to the crib those ears of corn went into a special container so they could be dried and shelled and used for seed corn the next year. I rode in the wagon several times as dad picked the ears of corn. I had to watch out for the flying ears of corn as they bounced off the bang-board and fell into the wagon.

We had a large circular rack that stood about 6 feet tall and about 5 feet across, that was stored in the alley of the old crib. It was made up of bands of iron where dad would store the ears of corn to be used as seed corn the next year. Two ears of corn would hang, one on each end of a strip of metal with a U shape in the middle of it. The U part of this strip was placed over one of the bands of this tall round rack. Bands of iron held together by upright metal bars. This allowed the ears of corn to dry which made it easier to shell with the hand powered corn sheller for the next years planting.

That hand operated corn sheller was also good for removing the hulls from walnuts in the fall. In the early spring, prior to the planting season, Dad would take some of these kernels of corn that had been shelled and place them on a towel. After spreading the kernels out on this towel he would then wet the towel and then place this wet corned filled towel where it would stay warm. It was placed above the warming doors of the stove where it was dampened every day. After several days he would unwrap the towel and see how many kernels had germinated. That let him know how good his seed corn was for the coming year.

I was too young to help with the corn picking but do remember Dad picking corn an ear at a time from two rows at a time in the field and then scooping off the load of corn into the crib in the evening. That made for a long day. A team of horses pulled the wagon and they would start
and stop on commanded by the farmer picking the corn. Farmer’s horses were very well trained. When I was very young I can remember going out to the old corncrib and getting ear corn to burn in the kitchen stove. Corn was selling for ten cents a bushel at that time so it was cheaper to burn corn then coal.

**Milk Cows**

We always had milk cows, chickens, sheep and hogs on the farm. I did not like to milk the cows while in high school, so my Dad would milk the cows by hand and I would do the rest of the chores. In the winter the cows were dirty from lying on the manure covered straw at night and you watched where you placed your head on their side while milking. At the same time you balanced yourself on a wooded one-legged stool. This stool consisted of a 4 X 4 about a foot and a half long, nailed to the center of a foot long 1 X 6 piece of wood. You sat yourself on that wooden leg while holding the milk pail between your legs while milking the cow. Of course if you had a cow that kicked, you had to place kickers on that cow. That consisted of a couple of clips placed around the cow hind legs and a chain pulled tight between them. That held the cow’s legs close together and she could not kick. Anyway that was the main idea of it, but it did not always work. Most of our cows were not kickers.

When I was real young I would take my cup to the barn and drink warm milk right from the cow. It made a lot of foam in the cup. Of course we always had a cat or two that would also like the warm milk. You would squirt the milk out of the cow’s tit at the cat and they would follow the stream with their mouth drinking the warm milk. I had to go out in the cold and feed the chickens, cattle, and hogs while Dad milked the cows.

After we milked the cows we had to carry the pails of milk to the pump house in the summer and to the cave in the winter where the separator was located. That required putting the separator bowl disks together and putting the separator itself together and a clean filter to pour the fresh milk threw. Then we had to crank the separator till all the milk had flowed through it. The cream would come out one spout and the skimmed milk out the other spout. Then we would run some water through the separator to clean the milk out of the bowl making it easier for Mother to wash later. The skimmed milk would be fed to the hogs or we would pour it into a barrel and mix it with oats making it into a mash to be fed to them the next day. The barrel was only used in warm weather. This feed was called ‘slop’ and the hogs loved it. To this day that is what I think of skimmed milk, it’s something you feed to hogs. The cream was stored in the cave where it would not sour before we sold it on Saturday night. It was a great day when we bought the electric separator and then all we had to do was stand their waiting for it to finish. We did not have an icebox for food storage. Everything was stored in the cave to keep cool. Of course you had fresh milk and eggs every day so that was not a problem as far as storage was concerned. And the cream always came to the top of the milk. There was more cream on top of the milk in the summer time then in the winter. Cows did not eat as well in the winter.

**Cleaning out the barn**

In the spring we had to clean out the barn where the beef cattle were housed. That took several Saturdays. That was when I was out of school and could help. We would haul it out into the fields for fertilizer. All winter long as we cleaned out the milking stalls we just threw the manure
out the barn door onto a pile. That pile got rather large by spring. The other side of the barn was
where the beef cattle stayed in the winter, and the manure was really bad when we used soybean
straw for bedding. That manure stuck together like it was glued. It was extremely hard trying to
get a pitchfork full to throw into the manure spreader. This manure was later spread on our fields
for fertilities.

Sheep!
Several times there would be a little lamb that the mother sheep would not feed and we would
have to hand feed it with a bottle of milk. They became pets and would follow us around when
we would do the chores and other activities. We had one that would scare you to death when you
headed for the outhouse after dark and it would run up behind you.

Cod Liver Oil for our Health
Cod Liver Oil! I had to take it every morning before school. It was not bad when it was in cap-
sule form but when it was the liquid it was terrible. Most of the time Mother bought it in capsule
form. It was supposed to keep us well. It must have worked because I was well most of the
time. Except when I was in fifth grade and we all (JoAnn and I) had Scarlet Fever and I missed
about six to eight weeks of school. We were quarantined and could not have company or go any-
where for that time. There was a large red card placed on the outside doors of the house warning
everyone that we had the Scarlet Fever.

Butter and Cheese
My Mother would make butter and cottage cheese with the milk from the cows. After cooking
the milk for the cottage cheese she would then hang it in a cheesecloth bag on the clothesline
in the yard for the whey to drain out of the bag. The butter was made in a hand-operated churn,
which was not hard to do, but it was boring. Somewhat like watching water boil. As the but-
ter started to form you felt that you were accomplishing something. Mother would then salt the
butter to the taste that we liked. It was better than the butter that we buy today. Homemade ice
cream was a specialty that we made on rare occasions. In the summer we had to buy ice to make
the ice cream with a hand-operated ice cream maker. It seemed like you had to crank that thing
forever before the ice cream was ready.

Oleomargarine
About the time that the war was over you could buy oleomargarine. That was a butter substitute
but the problem was it was white in color. You would buy it in a plastic bag that looked like a
bag of white mush. Iowa law did not allow them to put coloring in the oleo. Minnesota allowed
the food coloring so if anyone of our friends were in Minnesota they would buy enough oleo for
themselves and us. Iowa law did allow oleo to be yellow in color. Pils had to be popped in the
bag that were yellow in color and then kneaded in with the oleomargarine. It was a real pain to
do this job but it did give the oleomargarine the yellow coloring of butter. This butter substitute
was much cheaper then the real butter.
The Cave
The cave was located just south of the pump house and full of canned vegetables. Many rows of canned peas, corn, beans, canned meat, and plenty of tomatoes were stored there where it was very cool. There were three or four rows of jars and cans and each row was about eight feet long so there was always a large supply of food in that cave. The tomatoes were canned in one and two-quart jars. They were canned whole as well as having the tomatoes made into juice. Getting the peas ready for canning was a big job where we all had to help. The corn was about the same thing, cutting the kernels off of the ears for canning before cooking the kernels.

The roof of the cave is to the right in this picture. Covered with snow at the time.

The peas and corn were placed in tin cans and sealed with a metal lid in a hand-operated canner sealer. It was very easy to cut yourself on the cans before the lid was attached. I still have a scar on my left hand to prove it. My scar did not come from the canning operation but from using one of the cans in a water-fight with Uncle Donald Gregson.

Aunt Rose: (Aunt Rose in her garden at Britt, IA)
At the beginning of World War II Aunt Rose, (our grandmother’s sister) had just purchased a 50-pound sack of sugar for all the cooking that she did. Sugar was a very scarce item and it was rationed and she did not want to get caught with all that sugar in her home so she gave it to my parents. They also did not want anyone to know that they had sugar so Mother cooked it in water and sealed the mixture in 2 quart fruit jars so she could honestly say that we had no sugar. This sugar mixture was stored in our cave for safekeeping. It was used for cooking purposes during the war years.

When we shelled corn from the crib Dad would always take a load of cobs to Aunt Rose at Britt. She would give me a silver dollar for the load of cobs. I still have two of those silver dollars. Aunt Rose always had sugar cookies and when it was time for the news to be heard on the radio we stopped everything and everyone moved to her living room and she would turn on the radio and no one could say a word till the
News was over. WNAX at Yankton and WCCO at Minneapolis were two of the stations that she listened to. She was always up on all the world and state news. Brother Ron has the clock that was located on the south wall of her kitchen. This was the fanciest clock that I had ever seen at that time. Uncle Herman had died several years before. I attended his funeral with Grandpa Bonnstetter in his 1937 Chevrolet coupe. He let me drive his car from the church to the cemetery. I was just big enough to see over the steering wheel and way to young for a driver’s license. I was eleven years old at that time. But we made it to the cemetery without any mishap.

Making Sauerkraut:
We made sauerkraut every summer. After putting the cabbage in a large crock it would be stored in the garage for aging. It was very good and I would occasionally take the plate off the top, which was held down with a rock, and tasted the mixture as it was aging. It was then placed in fruit jars for storage in the cave.

Butchering time:
Butchering a hog was a big project. It was all done at home in the alley of the old corncrib. After killing and bleeding the hog, it would be lowered into a barrel of very hot water. All the hair would be scrapped off the hide. Then the hog would be pulled up in the air with a block and tackle and cut into quarters that were then taken to the house for further cutting, trimming and later canning. It was in the 1940s that they had a commercial cold storage locker in Corwith. A person could have the locker plant butcher your animal or you could butcher it and then place your meat in a bin at the cold storage locker. Before butchering was done at the farm site, by the farmer with the help of neighbors. There was always plenty of help. We always seemed to have canned beef stored in the cave. The lard was made into soap that was very good at removing grease from your hands. This soap was also used for washing clothes. Our Mother still had a supply of lye soap when she passed away. The hog intestines were cleaned and used later for stuffing with sausage. That is why you never eat sausage casings today! It could be some of those old intestines!

Killed Brownie
Once while doing chores in the evening I was trying to get all the cattle (about 15 head of cows) into the barn but was having all kinds of troubles. Every time one or two cows would run the other way as I just about had them all in and the whole bunch would be out again. Having chased most of them into the barn one evening our pet calf, Brownie, bolted from the barn and I picked up a frozen clod of dirt
and threw it at him. Well, I hit him in the head and down he went. I killed the critter on the spot.
Brownie weighed about 600 pounds at the time. My Dad came home a very short time later
and we pulled Brownie into the other side of the barn with the tractor and butchered him that
evening. A couple of days later while eating supper I said, “pass Brownie,” and the folks did
not think that was too smart of a thing to say. But Brownie sure was good tasting meat. Jo Ann
remembers that one.

**Storms**
The cave was where we went when there were bad storms in the area. Several times over the
years we would get up in the middle of the night and grab a blanket and head for the cave. The
cave was located just south of the pump house. It was a hole in the ground that had a cement
floor, walls, and dome shaped ceiling. The dome was above ground level and covered with dirt.
The steps down into the cave were located to the south side. One large door opened horizontally
at ground level and then at the bottom of the steps there was another door going into the cave.
This cave was very cool in the summer and warm in the winter. For storms we normally would
only stay for an hour or so and then head back to the house. We would have to carry a lantern for
light because until we got electricity there were no lights in the cave. This is the same cave that
was used for storing food and in later years separating the milk.

**Fuel For The Cook Stove**
Another one of the chores was to be sure that there was a basket of corncobs placed next to the
kitchen stove every night. Dad finally made a wooden box to hold the corncobs that looked
much better than the basket. If we ran out of corncobs in the cob house then we would have to
go into the hog lot and pick up the cleanest cobs we could find for the stove. This made for more
work.

**Frank Bonnstetter**
Once we had Frank Bonnstetter, the veterinarian from Wesley, down to work on one of the
horses. I don’t know what the problem was. The horse kicked Frank and knocked out one of his
teeth. He sent Dad a bill for extracting a tooth. It was a joke and Dad never did pay the bill for
the tooth. Frank was a relative and good friend of the family.

**Christmas Time**
For several years at Christmas time when I was very young, the only decorations on the Christ-
amas tree were streamers of popped popcorn held together with thread. It was my job to thread
the popcorn for the tree. Of all the Christmas presents that I have received over the years the one
that stands out was the junior sized bicycle. It had a back wheel standard, which allowed me to
ride it in the dining room until warm weather arrived. I rode it stationary for many miles in that
room. In my mind I would visualize riding down the gravel road to town.

**My transportation vehicle**
Dad had an old 1929 Chevrolet car that had the body cut off and the rear end removed and
restored with a truck rear end. The bench front seat was still attached to the body. Dad used
this rig to plant and cultivate soybeans. He had a planter that would plant three rows of beans
at a time. Dad operated the cultivator while riding on a seat on the rear of the cultivator, which
was attached to the rear of this car and I would drive it. The 29 Chevrolet was the replacement for the original model T that this outfit was mounted on when we got it. I do remember driving the Model T. I drove it through a fence once, while Dad riding on the rear cultivator. My Dad would put the Model T in gear and all I had to do was press down on the low pedal and pull a lever on the floorboard back when the thing started to move. To stop it I had to put the lever forward and apply the brake pedal. Somehow I must have goofed and missed the lever. It was hard on the fence because I make a large hole in it. The Chevrolet was a good replacement for the old Model T Ford.

This homemade tractor had no headlights, brake lights, horn, windshield or windshield wipers, cab, no registration plates, or insurance coverage. There were no pictures taken of this vehicle that I can find. But this was the vehicle that I drove all over the area when I wanted to go somewhere when I was older. There were many times that I drove it when I was too young to have a driver’s license. This vehicle was my transportation to go swimming on Sunday afternoon when the guys were to meet at the Johnson gravel pit northwest of Corwith.

We used this vehicle to pull wagons to and from the field during corn harvest season. It was an extra tractor for Dad.

One time I was physically pushing this vehicle into the shed. There was not room to drive it into shed because the roof of the shed was too low to allow a driver. Bill was steering it, as young as he was, but he stuck his head up at the wrong time and had his head wedged between the roof of the shed and the drivers seat backrest of this homemade tractor. He cried a little before I was able to push the vehicle backwards relieving the pain and letting the grip on his head disappear. Must not have hurt him too much and there doesn’t appear to be any permanent damage to him. For most of the times that I drove it on the highway I did not have a drivers license. We seldom saw a highway patrolman or a sheriff in our area of the county. Corwith did not have a policeman.

There was one time after I graduated from high school that we did see a highway patrolman. Roland and Verle Hankins and I were skiing on old highway #60. How do you ski on a major highway? With a long rope tied to the rear bumper of the car and the person skiing in the ditch being pulled by this rope. We only had a few inches of snow in the ditch but that was enough to make this sport work. Believe it or not a highway patrolman showed up and made us stop this dangerous sport. Roland was driving the car at that time. We did not get a ticket but only told to stop our activities. I was the one skiing in the ditch being pulled by the rope at the time we where stopped.

**GAS SUPPLY ON FARM**

Putting gas into a farm tractor was a dangerous job. For many years we would put 5-gallons in at a time from a gas can filled from our gas barrel. The gas barrel was a 50-gallon barrel mounted about three feet above the ground on a stand. When the tank was full and gas would be spilled you had to be careful not to get it on the hot engine. The tractor was always filled before going to the field in the morning. At noon it was filled again after eating our noon meal. Later we had the gas barrel placed on posts. This raised the barrel to about six feet off the ground. This was
great for us on the farm but the gas deliveryman had to haul the gas up a ladder 5-gallon at a time to fill the tank. This storage tank consisted of two 50-gallon barrels welded together making it a 100-gallon storage barrel. Then a hose and nozzle was attached to the barrel and we could fill the tractor with ease. What an improvement over the 5-gallon can. Again I was too young to lift the big 5-gallon cans and when I was old enough to do the job we had the hose. It was only a short time later that the tank man got a pump attached to his truck and he did not have to lift the 5-gallon cans full of gas to fill our tank.

Fuel Problems
One time, while working in Forest City for the telephone company I came home for the weekend, on my motorcycle, and the pickup truck was not being used. The folks were gone for the evening so I decided to use the pickup truck. First it needed some gas, so out to the gas barrel I drove the truck. Filled it from the overhead 100-gallon barrel. The truck motor operated very well until I was about ½ mile south of our farm and then it died. It would start and then die. After some time I got it running well enough to nurse it back home. It was only later, after the folks arrived home, that they told me Dad had placed Diesel fuel in that old gas barrel. So that was why I had to stay home that night. That truck would not run on diesel fuel.

The gas pumps in town were gravity fed. That is the operator would pump 10 gallons of gas up into a glass tank that everyone could see and when you bought gas they would let it drain through a hose into your gas tank. The amount of your gas purchase was viewed on the side of the glass tank by markers located at every gallon.

Pheasant Hunting
During pheasant hunting season we always had relatives from eastern Iowa come over to hunt in our area. They were from mother’s side of the family (Gregson’s). The season opened at noon each day so in the mornings we would go rabbit hunting. We would drive the rabbits to one side of a field where at least one person was standing and the others worked the field in their direction shooting any rabbits that they could scare up.

But the best pheasant hunting was at night. We would drive our car out into the oats stubbles or hay fields at night with a man riding on the front fender of our car. Or better yet one person on each fender, hanging on to the headlight for safety. The person riding on the fender carried a club or old broomstick to kill the pheasant. When a pheasant would fly up ahead of the car one of those men would jump off and head in the direction that the pheasant flew. As soon as the
pheasant got out of the light of the headlights they had to land because they could not see. This method was always good for two or three pheasants a night.

**HAY BALERS**

While in high school I worked on hay balers during the summer vacation. The first year one of our neighbors who lived northeast of our farm had an old John Deere baler that was what you called a block baler. One man would stand behind where the hay came up the loader and he would stop the flow of hay into the chamber. When the hay flow stopped he would then move a lever forward causing a wooden block to be inserted ahead of the next bale of hay. There were slots in this wooden block where the guy riding on the left side would insert the two wires that we would then use to tie the bale together. The guy riding on the right side would tie the ends together, pulling the wires tight to form a firm bale. When the plunger compressed the hay in the chamber the dust would cover all of us. You could hardly breathe on a hot day. We wore goggles and tied our shirt shut at the neck so the hay dust would not go down our shirt.

The next summer Harvey Hankins bought a Case hay baler and his sons Roland and David Hanskins I worked on it. It was more modern and did not have the block system. What it had was an aluminum U shaped bar called a needle that the operator riding on the left side would insert into the side of the bale chamber when the plunger was backward, or toward the front of the machine. Then after several strokes of the plunger the hay would have pushed the needle back far enough for the operator to insert the baling wire through a slot, one wire in the top slot and one wire in the bottom slot. The guy riding on the other side of the bale chamber would then wait for the next bale to be formed by the same method with the other end of the wire being inserted through the needle by that operator. The tier would then tie the two ends of wire together pulling it tight to form a good bale. If the tier did not pull the wire tight, the bale would be very loose and fall apart when picked up later. This type of baler was not as dirty to work on as the old John Deere but still dirty.

**Dad’s Hay Baler**

In my senior year Dad bought a new International “50T” Baler and a new 1947 International pickup truck. I got the job of running the baler. We pulled the baler with a “B” International tractor. The 50T baler has it own motor so the tractor was used just to pull the baler. It was one of the new types using only twine to hold the bales and a person on the tractor was all that was needed to operate it. It was faster and not nearly as dirty to operate. The only trouble that I had was due to the dry summer. We were able to bale straw and hay very early in the mornings and run late into the evenings because of this dry weather. Many a night I arrived home after dark only to leave home before seven the next morning. I did not know it until later but we paid for the baler and the pickup truck that summer just baling hay and straw. Dad sold the baler after I left home when he had to run it himself.
Graduation from High School

I graduated from high school in 1947. We had 18 people in my senior class, nine boys and nine girls. Only one boy went on to a four-year college after graduation, Cecil Zweifel attended a college in Illinois. Bill Welter did attend a Business College at Mason City. The rest of the guys joined the world of work. At that time very few graduates attended college. Cecil went on to a teaching and coaching career in Kentucky and Bill went to work for the Federal Internal Revenue Service.

One day in bookkeeping class, while in high school, Cecil was caught chewing gum. The teacher had Cecil come to the front of the class and spit out his gum into the waste paper basket. Knowing Cecil, I knew that he would bite his gum into two pieces and only spit out half of it. The teacher figured this out also. So as Cecil arrived back to his desk near the rear of the classroom I popped my gum that I had been chewing all the time. The teacher marched right back to Cecil’s desk grabbed all his books from the desk and opened the door of the classroom and threw all his books on the floor of the assembly hall. At the same time pointed for Cecil to follow the books from the classroom. No one popped their gum in her class after that. I don’t know if she ever knew that I was the one who popped the gum instead of Cecil.

I always said that I was going to leave home when I graduated from high school. Well the baler did not allow that, but when the summer was over things were different. On a Saturday evening when we had just finished the chores Dad asked me if and when I was going to leave home. I told him, “Give me the keys to the truck and I would see what I could do about that.” I cleaned up and then drove to Forest City where I found the telephone company office. I had heard that they were looking for help. As luck would have it the boss was in the office. Mike Martenson was the local manager for the owner, Central Iowa Telephone Company from Cedar Rapids. Well Mike had just broken his leg and was desperate for a helper and I got the job. That was on a Saturday night and I went to work Tuesday morning at 8:00 AM. Monday was
Labor Day. I worked for the Forest City telephone company until the next July when I joined the Navy.

Motorcycle

While working at Forest City I bought a motorcycle. This was one of the dumber things that I have done. It was a new 1947 Harley Davidson 45 motorcycle. The only good thing about the cycle was the gas mileage that it got. Of course it always rained every time I wanted to go some place. You always had to have a raincoat in the saddlebags. I came home from Millington, Tennessee while stationed there going to an Electronics school and rode the cycle back to Tennessee. I sold it before being transferred to Norfolk, VA.

U.S. Navy

I had driven my motorcycle home from Forest City for the weekend and met Bill Shipman in Corwith on a Saturday night. It was the summer of 1948. He talked about joining the Navy and I said that I would go with him. So the next week we enlisted for a three-year hitch. My training was at the Great Lakes Training Station and from there I was sent to Millington, Tennessee for a six week aviation school and then 36 more weeks training in aviation electronics. From there the Navy sent me to Norfolk, VA for another four weeks training. I then received orders to report to the Naval Air Station at Quonset Point, Rhode Island to “FASRON 2 Squadron.” It was a service squadron where the fleet would send their planes to be serviced after they returned from a six-month cruise. We worked on all types of naval warplanes. They were prop planes until late in my tour, when we received the F9F jets. Boy, did we think it was great. The thing that I will always remember was the price. $100,000.00 was a lot of money then for a F9F jet. I spent 2 years at the Quonset Point Naval Air base. President Harry Truman gave us another year because of the Korean War so I ended with a four-year hitch in the Navy. I never had any sea duty. I had many flights in different types of airplanes. I always wanted to ride in one of the jet fighters. I could not swing that desire into a reality. My job in the Navy was an aviation electronics technician. I had the rank of a second-class petty officer when discharged in 1952. We worked on the radio and radar on the planes assigned to our squadron. Besides working on the equipment in the repair shop I later was assigned to the line crew, which met that I had to fly in any plane that had a radar unit installed. I would check out the radar unit while the pilot checked out the airplane.
We made two emergency landings while on this assignment. One was the hydraulics system of the airplane went out and that caused the brakes to not work. The emergency vehicles followed us down the runway and since we had safely landed they turned around and headed for the garage. The only problem was that we did not have any brakes and the water of Narragansett Bay was at the end of the runway. The pilot turned the plane and coasted down another runway after running out of runway on the one that we landed on. He then called me on the intercom and had me jump out of the side door of the fighter plane and get rocks and throw them in front of the wheels to slow the plane to a stop. He then radioed the tower to send a tow vehicle to tow the plane back to the hanger. The other time we had a gas leak and radioed for an emergency landing. We were flying in a TBM, which is a torpedo bomber, World War II vintage. After landing we discovered that the gas leak was near the exhaust pipe and we could have blown up while in the air. This pilot was later killed in an airplane accident after I had been discharged from the Navy.

Once I had the opportunity to get some flight time when the plane was towing a target for a ship at sea to shoot at. We were in a TBM, Torpedo Bomber, and there were two of us in the rear of the plane. I had to ride in the machine gunner’s seat. That was a great view of the action. The only thing wrong was that most of the action was so far to the rear and too far under us to see much of the gunfire. The only thing that I was afraid of was that the ship’s radar sighted guns would lock onto the steel cable that towed the target and the guns would start shooting at the airplane we were in. The target was a cloth cone towed about 2000 feet behind our plane. When the exercise was over we flew over the base airfield and the guy in the belly of the plane attached a metal cone onto the cable at the right time so the cone would slide to the end of the cable and cut the target off the line and it would land on the ground and not in the bay. They could then count the number of holes in it to see how good the gunners were.
MY FIRST CAR
I came home on leave from the Navy in 1950 and drove the folk’s car to Whittemore and bought myself a new car. It was a 1950 Chevrolet five passenger coupe, blue in color. I paid $1500.00 for it, right off the showroom floor. I drove it for two years and traded it for a demonstrator 1951 Pontiac hard top, just before being discharged from the Navy. I traded in my old car and also paid $600.00 for the Pontiac. It was blue and cream in color. What a car, it had an under the front seat heater, which was great in cold weather. I was still driving it when I joined the Highway Patrol in 1953.

My rank when discharged from the navy was an Aviation Electronics Technician second-class petty officer. After being discharged from the Navy I drove a gravel truck hauling gravel for roads in the Burt, Iowa area. That fall I attended Iowa State College. It was while attending there in my freshman year that I learned they were going to hire some people (21) for the Iowa Highway Patrol. I drove to Des Moines where I was interviewed and took some tests. I figured if I got the job I would take it and if not I would enroll at Northern Iowa College at Cedar Falls for the next year. It was a much smaller school than Iowa State. There were 2500 in our freshman class that year at Iowa State College.

Jerry Elbert, from Corwith, who was a year behind me in high school was also enrolled at Iowa State. In the winter months at Iowa State Jerry and I would have lunch with Dale Flemming, also from Corwith. He was a driver’s license clerk for the driver’s license examiner. Driver License Examiner’s were Iowa Highway Patrolmen. It was at one of these lunches that Dale told us the state was going to hire highway patrol officers. Jerry and I both applied for the patrol. We drove to the Des Moines, post one headquarters, and took some test and also they checked out height. Jerry was one half of an inch too short for the patrol. My application went through with no problems.

The patrol school started in the third quarter of my freshman year at Iowa State College so I had to drop out of school before my first year was completed to attend the patrol school. My plans were that if I did not get on the highway patrol I would go back to college and graduate. One of the things that I was going to do was change my major from electrical engineering to something different.

HIGHWAY PATROL SCHOOL
In May of 1953 I attended the Iowa State Patrol School at Camp Dodge in Johnston, IA. There were 32 men in attendance and we were competing for the 21 jobs that were available at that time. The patrol school was a four-week school located at Camp Dodge, the National Guard base, in Johnston, Iowa. We did calisthenics and marched very morning and attended classes on criminal law, first aid and traffic laws taught by senior highway patrol officers. Sgt. Kilts taught motor vehicle law. We also spent plenty of time on the shooting range, learning to shoot a 38-caliber gun and a 12 gauge shot gun. On Saturdays we played soccer where it seemed we kicked the devil out of each other. That was harder on us then the rest of the program.
A couple of weeks before the patrol school was over we were asked to write down where we would like to be assigned on the patrol. I had only been fishing once in the lakes area but it sounded like a good place to be assigned. So that is where I put in my request.

On the last day of the school we were called into the highway patrol office at Camp Dodge and told if we were going to be hired and where we were to be assigned. We were told to head home after that. We all had our personal cars packed and the school was over. Several of us had a pact between us. We met several miles from Camp Dodge to compare if we were hired and where our assignment was to be. If you did not get hired you would not stop at that location. There were 32 men in the school and it turned out that an officer had resigned from the patrol so they hired 22 people from our camp. The rest were placed on a reserve list. Some were never hired; others were hired in the next years.

My assignment was to Spencer, Iowa. I had never been in Spencer before so it was going to be a new experience for me. I had never traveled in northwest Iowa before being assigned there by the highway patrol.

On June 1, 1953, I was sworn in as an Iowa Highway Patrolman and left the state headquarters of the Highway Patrol in Des Moines for a long weekend at home at Corwith and then to Spencer, Iowa on the following Monday morning. The badge number that was assigned to me was #117. That would also be my car license plate number for my 34-year career on the patrol.

There were 250 highway patrol officers on the patrol then. The pay was about $200.00 per month, receiving slightly over $92.00 on the first and fifteenth of each month.

I had been in the Navy for four years and wore a uniform during that time, but wearing a State Patrol officer’s uniform was different. I felt like everyone was looking at me wherever I went. Maybe it was because of wearing a gun belt and holster with a gun and badge. The gun was concealed in the holster with a flap on the left hip but there was something about the uniform and people watching. It took several weeks of being on the patrol before I was able to get over that feeling.
Having no knowledge of where the patrol office was located in Spencer I stopped at a gas station and had gas put in the car. I had worn my patrol uniform from Corwith to Spencer that day. In those days the station attendant put the gas in and that meant that I did not have to get out of the car. While paying for the gas I asked the guy where the patrol office was located. After driving to the patrol office location I parked the car and worked on getting enough nerve to get out of the car with this new uniform on. Just at that time another new officer, who was in my camp at Des Moines, drove up in his personal car. That was Bill Tordoff, who was newly assigned to the Cherokee post and he stopped in Spencer to talk to Sgt. Kilts. Bill was from Estherville and had known Sgt. Kilt’s for several years. With Bill there I did not feel so conspicuous in that patrol uniform so I got out of the car and went inside to the patrol office. I had worn a navy uniform for four years prior to this day but there was something about that patrol uniform that made me feel different. Very conspicuous!

I met Officer Wayne Soule that day and he was to be my training officer for the first month on the highway patrol. Sgt. Kilts drove me around the east four counties the next day. We stopped at each courthouse and talked to the local sheriff in each or the counties and also stopped in at each police station in the four county-seat towns. The Spencer patrol office was located in the basement of the City Hall of Spencer and the city police station was located upstairs in 1953.

New patrol officers are not issued a patrol car so they rode with veteran officers for about 6 months before getting their own patrol car. One of my first training officers was Darrel Hanson who lived in Spencer. He would pick me up in his patrol car in Spencer and we would patrol the east part of post 6 area. Later I rode with Francis Meyer from Greenville.

About one week after being on the patrol there was a flood in the Spencer area. Highway 71 was flooded in the south part of Spencer. Patrol officer Wilton Lewis and I were assigned to block the west bound traffic of highway #18 east of Spencer and direct traffic around the flooded south part of Spencer.

Having never lived in the northwest part of Iowa I had no idea where any towns were located or the highways and county roads. So I used a road map and had people show me where they wanted to go and then I could show them where the highways were blocked. I think I was the dumbest patrol officer the state ever had at that time.
The first time I ever drove a patrol car was on this assignment with Wilton Lewis. I got to drive Wilton Lewis’ patrol car to Ruthven so I could get something to eat. Boy, did I think that was hot stuff. It was worth all the riggers of the patrol school. I was on the patrol about 6 months before I was issued my own patrol car. It was a blue 1953 Chevrolet car. It had a single red light mounted on the roof and a long whip antenna on the left trunk deck of the patrol car. The police radio was a 25-watt transmitter radio. There were dead spots in our area where we were unable to contact state radio in Storm Lake. Sometimes that worked to our advantage.

“PARKER”
Our State Patrol radio dispatcher was located in Storm Lake. They were always calling a guy called “Parker”. This person worked day and night because they were always calling him. I did not want to show my stupidity by not knowing who this guy “Parker” was so for several weeks I thought he was the hardest working officer in the state. It was only later did I find out that this “Parker” was a police radio station in South Dakota that our Iowa dispatcher was calling. All state police traffic for South Dakota was handled through this method. A person should always ask questions.
I rented a room at highway patrol officer Wayne and wife Connie Soule’s home for about two years while living in Spencer. It was only when I got married in 1955 that I moved out of Spencer to the home that we bought in West Okoboji. I was going to be married in June and the house was bought in May of that year.

**Milford Police - Telephone Use in 1953**

Milford’s Chief of Police, Mr. Stan Coleman, was the town’s only police officer. Stan normally worked nights but was subject to being called out for daytime activities. He never complained about his hours worked. No one complained in those days about working long hours. The job had to be done and that was it. It was later that the city hired a part-time man to fill in for Stan, which allowed him to have a day off each week.

No police training was required for local peace officers at this time. The only officers who had formal training were the highway patrol officers. We had attended a four-week training academy in Des Moines run by the Department of Public Safety, before being hired by the Iowa Highway Patrol. We were called in to offer advice to many police department. Fatal auto accidents that happened in a city were investigated by the highway patrol. All county fatal accidents were investigated by the patrol. In later years the patrol had selected officers trained in technical accident investigation. Today all peace officers are required to attend a formal training within one year of being hired.

Milford did not have a police radio in the early 50’s. No cities had police radios at that time in our area. When they did get radios their frequency was 37.10mhz and the Highway Patrol’s frequency was 42.58mhz. They could not hear our police traffic and we could not hear them.

Before the Milford police car had a police radio if something happened and people in Milford needed an officer they would dial the Milford Municipal Light Plant. They would tell the plant operator what had happened and the need for an officer. The operator would then turn on a light mounted at the main intersection on Highway #71 in Milford. The light was mounted on wires in the middle of the intersection like traffic light only white in color. When Chief Coleman observed the light on he would drive to the light plant and find out where he was needed. The light plant had people on duty 24 hours a day. The light plant had generators that supplied the city of Milford with their electric power. This arrangement lasted for many years in Milford before police radios were available to their police department.

The Sheldon Police Department had a similar arrangement for their city. Their light hung over Highway 33 at the main intersection in Sheldon. I don’t recall who turned on the light in case someone needed a police officer in Sheldon.

In the winter months the Milford Chief had an electric heater in the back seat of the city police car. He would park at the main intersection in Milford near a light pole but where he could observe the call light. This pole had a 110-volt light plug located near the base of the street light. Stan would plug in his heater to this plug and was able to keep warm in his car without running the motor and using gas to keep warm. The power cord was run through the rear window. If he received an emergency he could just drive away and the power cord would disconnect.
On a warm night in July a couple of patrol officers found Stan asleep in his police car parked at this main intersection in Milford. They just happened to have some M-80 cherry bombs in their patrol car. A firecracker was placed next to the chief’s police car with the fuse of the firecracker inserted into a lighted cigarette. This would allow the officers to be long gone when the firecracker exploded. Chief Coleman never did find out who did that trick on him.

**Meeting Mavis Geurink**

In the summer of 1954 the wife (Bonnie) of the Chief of Police in Arnolds Park, Mike Lenz, invited me to meet a girl who worked at the same restaurant that she did. She would have a chicken dinner for me the next evening. She would have this girl there for the chicken dinner and I could meet her. That girl was Mavis Geurink, who was working at Red’s Café in Arnolds Park for the summer months while teaching school during the school year. After a very good chicken dinner I invited Mavis to attend a movie at the drive-in theater at Milford. Don’t remember what the name of the movie was, but said to myself while watching the movie that I was going to marry this lady. We were married on May 20, 1955 in Jackson, Minn.

**Our Home**

About a month before we were married we bought a house in West Okoboji that we are still living in. I met a real estate salesman on highway #71, just north of Milford. I recognized his car as that of the local realtor. I turned on the red light on my patrol car and stopped him. I asked Mr. Pat Kelly if he had any good homes for sale. He told me he had just come from listing a home in Terrace Park. We both drove back to the home and I looked it over. Later that evening Mavis and I looked over the property. We decided we would buy it. The price was $12,500.00. All the money I had was about $750 in the bank and some of that was to be used for a honeymoon in the Black Hills. I put $500 down to secure the property and then checked with Northwest Federal for a loan.

In all the years that Mr. Kelly had been selling real estate that was the fastest he had ever sold a house without having a buyer in mind before listing the house for sale. The home we purchased was in West Okoboji (1603 Larabee Street) and it came with the following furnishings. The beds were made with extra bedding sheets, blankets, pillows, a piano, washing machine, chairs, pictures on the wall, refrigerator, piano, electric ironer, silverware in the kitchen, dishes and some food in the refrigerator all came with the house. Not being married at the time we had none of these items. The property in addition to the house lot included a 12-foot wide easement on Lake West Okoboji on Brown’s Bay.
I paid the lady (Ruthie Geckler Anderson Hass) $500.00 in April of 1955 for the down payment and the rest was due upon delivery of the deed. Mavis and I were married in Jackson, MN on May 20, 1955, and a month after purchasing the house.

Our loan went through but the lady that we bought the property from was unable to secure a clear title for the property. She had moved out and moved in with her parents who lived in Milford at the time. When getting the paper work in order for the transfer she discovered that she was still married. She thought the divorce had been granted several years before. After finally obtaining the divorce she then discovered that she also had her sister’s name on the property title. This was done several years before to help keep the property for her while the divorce was in progress. This sister was in a mental instruction in California and it took some time to get her signature. I had taken possession of the house and moved into the house before getting married. After we were married we moved into the house that we are still living in today.

Ruthie Geckler Anderson Haas, the lady who owned the house, had an attorney from Estherville for her lawyer. Over the next several years we paid her money for the furnishing in this house, which went against the purchase price. This was to help Ruthie have money to live on. But this also allowed us to have enough equity in the home to qualify for homestead on taxes. Good deal for both of us. We made no house payments for about 4 years but we did pay the taxes. By the time all the paper work was in order we had saved $5,000 which we able to lower the loan that we needed for the house. All we borrowed from Northwest Federal was $7,000 on a 15-year loan. The interest rate was 4.5% and our payment was $55.00 per month. We paid this note off in six or seven years.

The first thing we did after buying the house was to tear out the tin ceiling in the kitchen and remodel the kitchen. We wish that we had kept the tin ceiling in the kitchen as it’s the “in-thing” today. In later years we enclosed the screened-in front porch and made it into a family room. We also remodeled the living room and added a double car garage to the east side of the house.
This house was built as a cottage and in the tornado of 1936 it was hit hard and should have been torn down at that time. They fixed it up and it’s still standing today but shows the results of that storm yet today.

After getting married Mavis continued doing substitute teaching in the Arnolds Park and Milford school systems. She also did substitute teaching in the Catholic School System in Milford. Later she went to work part time in the Elementary School Library in Milford where she worked for 18 years before retiring. The Elementary Library was a new project for the school and Mavis and another lady set up the whole thing. It was a big project. Hundreds and hundreds of books had to be inventoried and carded.

Banking in Milford
We banked at the Dickinson County Savings Bank in Milford when we were first married. The banker was Mr. S. I. Russell. If you wanted to get into your lock box you just held up your lock box key as you walked by the clerk and told her you were going to check your lock box. Then you walked by the clerk’s windows of the bank through the open door near the back of the bank and there on the wall was a ring full of keys. You took the ring and one of the keys was marked lock box. That was the bank’s master key to all the lock boxes. You then had your own key to your box. Inserting both keys into your lock box opened the box. When you were finished you hung up the bank’s key ring on the peg by the door and left the bank. Always said “Thank you” to the cashier on duty that day. That was the good old days of banking when everyone trusted everyone and people were honest.

First Fatal Accident Investigated
Late one night I was called to an accident two miles west of Ruthven and about three-fourths of a mile north on a gravel road. Upon arriving at the scene, I discovered the driver of the car was drunk and had lost control of his car and ran it off onto the shoulder of the gravel road. Parked in this position, the passenger started to get out of the car and as he was part way out the door, the car rolled over on its side crushing this male passenger.
It was the first time I had to handle a fatal accident. I had been on the Highway Patrol less than one year at this time. There was one other officer out that night and I placed a radio call for him. He was in Emmetsburg but out of his patrol car and State Radio was unable to contact him, so I was alone with this investigation. I had a drunken driver and a dead person at the scene. This was the first time I had ever touched a dead person. I had to help load him into the ambulance when it arrived at the scene. This is called being broken in by fire.

**Our Bowling Team**

In the fall and winter of 1954 we had a bowling team made up of law enforcement officers in the Lakes Area. Patrolman Doyle Derickson, Sheriff Kissinger, Deputy Sheriff Elmer Eckert and myself. Counties in Iowa only had a sheriff and one deputy in those days. The bowling alley was in the basement of the old Maid Rite Building where Doyle’s wife Mert had the restaurant on the ground floor.

When we were on night shift for the patrol we bowled in uniform. The gun belt was removed and placed on a chair next to where we sat. After our game was over we would go back to work for the patrol. We had a pretty good team. We would radio in to Storm Lake State Radio and go 10-7 at the restaurant upstairs. Supervision never complained about this activity. Maybe they did not know what we were doing. But when it was the end of our shift and quitting time we would put in extra time to make up for the bowling time. The only supervisor that we had at this time was Sgt. Kilts and he worked the day shift all the time.

**Fractured Vertebrae**

In 1975 I was doing some carpenter work on our house on my day off. This work was on the entryway to our kitchen. As the project was about finished I was standing near the top step of a five-foot stepladder when it slipped and I went flying. I fell on my back on top of the stepladder, just missing the cement steps with my head. I felt a very shape pain in my back. After lying there for a few minutes I was able to get up and walk over to our neighbor to the north of our home. Roger Johnson went over and got our car and I climbed into the rear seat lying on my back. Upon arrival at the hospital they placed me in a wheel chair and wheeled me into the x-ray room. After that there was no more sitting in a wheel chair. I had a compression fracture in my lower back.

I spent three weeks in the hospital at Spirit Lake laying flat on my back. They measured me for a back brace after a couple of days, but after about the second day the use of a bedpan arrived. After that I figured if I did not eat I would not have to use that thing. So from then on Mavis ate my meals when she visited me in the hospital. In those three weeks I lost about 20 pounds.

Upon getting out of the hospital I started an exercise program. I did pushups every day and plenty of running. Before going back to work about five months later I was able to run a mile without stopping. This was the best shape that I had ever been in since joining the Highway Patrol.
Highway Patrol, Accident Investigated

I had been on the highway patrol for a couple of years when this situation happened. It was Clay County Fair time and I was called to investigate an accident just north of Spencer on highway 71. The accident involved one of the carnival workers and a guy from Independence, Missouri. It totaled out the guys car from Missouri. When I asked this guy for his driver’s license he opened his billfold and it was packed with green backs. A lot of money in the billfold and here is this older man not dressed well in an old beat-up Ford automobile. So I gave him a lecture on how to get travelers checks so he would have plenty of money with him when he was traveling to Canada fishing in the future. After investigating the accident with this guys car totaled I hauled him to Spirit Lake in my patrol car to place him in a hotel for the night. Spencer hotel and motels are all full at fair time. The next morning I picked him up and hauled him to Spencer to talk with an attorney about getting legal representation about this accident since he was from out of State and in the right. That was the last I saw him.

A couple of days later our neighbor to the north of our home was told about this accident involving the guy from Independence, Missouri. The Ruedy’s lived in Independence, MO but had a summer cottage next to our home at the lakes. Fred told me he knew the guy. This man’s name was Polly Compton and he was a personal friend of Harry Truman. Fred told me that when Mr. Truman was in town, he and Polly Compton would play “pennyanti” poker at each other’s home on Thursday evenings.

The best part was what Fred Ruedy, told me about Mr. Compton. He was a millionaire. He owned the Firestone Rubber Company in Kansas City and the Polly Pop Company also in Kansas City.

Mr. Compton, was a gentleman, he never let me know I was stupid in telling him how to carry his money. The attorney that I selected for Mr. Compton told me later that Compton’s daughter drove his new Cadillac up to Spencer for him to continue on his trip to Canada fishing.

Lesson learned: keep you mouth shut unless you know what you are talking about.
President Truman in Spencer
Ex President Truman flew into the Spencer airport and stayed at the Tangney Hotel for one night. The next day there was a request for some State Highway Patrol officers to stand guard on the second floor of the hotel. That is where President Truman had a room and he was working on his speech that he was going to give to support Iowa Governor Loveless.

The above officer’s were selected to be the guards. Wilton Lewis, Jim Bonnstetter, Sgt. Ralph Blankenbaker, and Ed Dickinson. We were told to not let anyone on second floor and Mr. Truman was in his room at that time. I had the assignment of standing in front of the door to his room.

After a while his door opened and out came this very tall gentleman and started talking to me about Mr. Truman working on his speech. At about the same time out of another door down the hall came this other gentleman who walked up to me and wanted to shake my hand. I extended
my hand and continued to look at the tall gentleman who was still talking to me about the pro-
gram later in the day.

The other officers came over at this time and we all had a conversation and that is when I real-
ized that I had been shaking the hand of the ex-president of the United States, and did not realize
it at the time.

About this time a lady journalist from Armstrong, Iowa, who we all knew, came up the stairs and
she wanted a picture of Mr. Truman. He said sure no problem. But what she really wanted was
her picture with Mr. Truman. So I was appointed to take the picture of her shaking the hand of
Mr. Truman.

After this was done and she thanked him he told her not to run off, she now had to take a picture
of the four officers and Mr. Truman. So this is how the above picture came to be.

I had two copies of the picture and sent them both to Independence, MO to the Truman Library
to have them autographed by Mr. Truman. That is what he did but kept one of the pictures for
the library files. It may still be there somewhere.

Practical Joke (We worked hard and played hard also)
One time while having early morning coffee at Vern & Coila’s the garbage man for West Okoboji
came in and bragged about finding a near full bottle of booze. He found this bottle in a garbage
can that morning. We had a good idea that he was going to drink it later.

Hey, how about fixing up some booze for him to find the next day on his route. So the grandson
of the owner of Vern & Coila’s took an empty bottle of wine into the bathroom and filled it with
urine. This bottle was then taken to a garbage can in the same area that the bottle of booze had
been found the day before. I have always wondered if he drank a little from this bottle?

Another Practical Prank
Bill Bradburn, who ran the DX gas station in Okoboji, was always ready for a good joke. He
and Edna Mae O’Farrel, who owned the O’Farrel’s Café, decided we would set up a couple of
women for a good joke. Bill and Edna Mae told them they were going to steal a goose for their
Thanksgiving dinner that night. They could come along and help. They apparently thought it
was a good idea because they went along with Bill and Edna Mae. Bill drove the car south of
Arnolds Park to an abandoned farm located just east of highway #71. Low and behold there in
the barn was a goose tied to a feed bunk with twine string. They put the goose in a gunnysack
and carried the goose to the car. The two women were in the back seat and Bill driving with
Edna Mae in the front seat. Bill headed north on highway #71 with the goose secured in the
gunnysack on the floorboards of the rear seat with the two women. What the two women did
not know was that I was parked on the west side of highway #71 in a field watching this opera-
tion. When they left the farm I dropped in behind their car. Bill drove through Arnolds Park and
Okoboji toward Spirit Lake on highway #71. Bill and I had this determined ahead of time. As
Bill approached the hospital area on highway #71, read lights on the Spirit Lake Police car came
on. There was a roadblock ahead, and at the same time my red lights were turned on. The chief
of Police of Spirit Lake approached the car with his flashlight and immediately looked in the rear seat area and there was a gunnysack jumping around. I was with him by this time and we took the gunnysack that contained the goose for evidence. Bill and his carload of women were to follow us to the police station at Spirit Lake where they were all interrogated.

We had no idea how we were going to end this caper. The two women were very much upset for having been involved with this theft of a goose. In fact they were both crying while in the conference room being interrogated by the Chief of Police Earl Miller of Spirit Lake. We could not tell them it was a hoax at this time.

Finally we came up with an idea. We told the women that we had called the farmer and he was going to let Bill buy the goose and we could let the group go free. We gave the women the goose to take home after all they had just bought it.

When they arrived home that night they put the goose under a wooden basket in one of the women’s garage and placed a large brick over the basket so the goose could not escape. They still did not trust us in that it could have been settled so easy.

About a week later, Edna Mae served up a terrific goose dinner at the O’Farrel Sister’s Café in Okoboji and all who were involved were invited. Those two women still did not trust us. We have laughed about that one for years.

**Bradburn Accident**

Bill Bradburn had a car accident in Okoboji one time and I was the investigating officer. It was rather obvious that Bill had rear-ended the other car on highway #71. Straight case of: not having his car under control. Bill and the other driver were standing near the cars looking at the damage as I drove up. I parked my car and walked over to the two men standing there. I looked at Bill and asked him, “How fast was he backing up when he hit you, Bill?” You should have seen the look on face of this guy from out of state. He had the look of someone who had just been in a very bad experience! All Bill could say, “He did not hit me”.

Then we all had a good laugh over it. Bill received a ticket for causing the accident.

**Sweet Corn Field**

Edna Mae owned some land in Okoboji where a farmer would plant sweet corn. Edna Mae did not charge him any rent for this land as long as she could have all the sweet corn she needed at the café. Now the fun begins. Bill and Edna Mae would get some poor innocent person to go with them to steal sweet corn at night. Bill would call me in the daytime and tell me what time they were going to be in the cornfield that night. I would turn on the red light when catching them red handed stealing the sweet corn. Scare this other person to death. Then we would all have a good laugh over it but not before they sweat a little over getting caught stealing corn.
Bus Load of Drunks
One time Coila Titterington, telephoned me from The Cabin, in Ashton, where she had the Vern & Coila’s Club’s Annual Christmas party. Howard, her son, had driven the entire staff over there for the party in a school bus that he owned. Some of the people had a little too much drink and they had booze in the bus on the return trip. Coila told me that Howard would be driving the bus back to the lakes area on Highway 9 and they were going to be leaving in about one hour. I was off that night so quickly got dressed in my uniform and headed west from the lakes area with my patrol car. About 30 miles west of the lakes area I pulled off on a gravel side road and waited for the school bus loaded with the employee’s headed east on highway #9. Sure enough Coila was right on schedule here came the bus. After it passed my intersection I dropped in behind it and when we came to a clear shoulder area I turned on my red top light on the patrol car and blew the siren. The bus pulled over and as I walked up on the right side of the bus I could hear Howard shouting to the people in the bus to keep quite! Curly, the bar tender, at the Club, who was in the back seat of the bus hollered to Howard that it was Jim, but Howard told him, it could not be me because I had been working the day shift and had the night off.

Howard died a dozen deaths that night. All he could think of was the whole load was going to be taken to jail for drinking on the highway and open bottles of booze in the bus and public intoxication. Howard’s mother, Coila, thought it was a great joke on Howard. She owned Vern and Coila’s Club, located in the city of West Okoboji. We have laughed about that one for many years.

Highway Patrol
In 1966 I took a job with the patrol as a Safety Education Officer working a 21 county area in northwest Iowa. This was my working area until 1969 when I wrecked my patrol car in Sioux City one morning. I had a talk scheduled in the southeast part of my area arriving home very late at night. The next morning I had a talk scheduled for the driver education class at a Sioux City School at 7:00AM. After that talk I was headed to the police station when I rear-ended a car at a traffic light. The lady stopped for the traffic light and I was looking the other way checking on a license plate violation on a vehicle going the opposite direction. Totaled out my patrol car in that accident. Captain Floyd Carver, my boss from Storm Lake, picked me up at the police station in Sioux City and hauled me to Milford. We had only traveled about 15 miles and I fell asleep in his patrol car. It had been a very short night and I was tired. It was only a couple of months later that the patrol added more officers to the Safety
Education Program. After that I had an eight county area to work. Very few short nights after my work area was reduced in size to eight counties.

**Traffic Tickets Issued**
One summer when I was the Safety Education Officer for post 6 the state was short of patrol officers and they assigned me to do nothing but patrol duties for 90 days. I would not be giving any safety programs for that period. Officer Bob Cherry, who lived in Milford, stated at the post 6 meeting that he would train me in patrol activities. We joked about my needing retraining. I had been one of Bob’s instructors at the Highway Patrol Academy in Des Moines when he attended it. I challenged him that we would see who could write the most tickets in the next 30 days. I had two days where I wrote 28 tickets each day. Those tickets included repair card, warnings and summons into court. When doing this I did not take any coffee breaks and took very little time off for my noon lunch or evening meals. Bob did not release this until it was too late for him to catch up with me. Sgt. Haze told me the most tickets he had ever written in one day was 32. I never could beat my 28 tickets in one day.

When this 30-day challenge was over I had written 100 summons tickets. I needed to write 6 on the last day to make the even 100 mark. I had to hunt real hard to find 6 good traffic violations that day. Some days they came easy and other days I had to be looking all the time for violators. I did carry a radar unit in my patrol car that helped me catch violators. I swept with a clean broom for those 30 days.

This picture was taken my last week on the Iowa State Patrol
One time several years before that I was assigned to a task force and we held a Vehicle Equipment Check, commonly called a light check, in downtown Fort Dodge. Lt. Floyd Meyer, from Fort Dodge, and I were working together. He let me write the repair cards for equipment violations that he had found. Counting those that he had me write and the ones that I wrote for myself my grand total for that day was 75 repair cards for vehicle equipment violations. Best one day activity in my 34 years on the patrol.

The Safety Education job was the most interesting job there is on the patrol. Meeting new people every day and giving them information rather than tickets into court. I was my own boss and worked some very odd hours. Most of my weekends were off and I had very few late night hours. On the regular patrol we patrolled till 2:00 AM. With the Safety Education job I would go home after an evening talk. When I had a night talk I would start my shift early enough so by the time I arrived home after the talk I would have my required shift hours worked.
City Council in West Okoboji
While on the highway patrol, in the 60’s, I filled out the term of a city councilman. The patrol did not allow patrol officers to be on a city council’s. Captain Lyle Dawson questioned me, and all I said was that “I had never run for a city council post”. The matter was dropped. They do allow officers to be on city councils at that time.

Retiring from the Highway Patrol
I retired from the Iowa State Patrol in 1987, after 34 years of service. This is a very stressful day when you retire from the highway patrol. The first thing was to find all the equipment that the patrol had issued me. This took some doing as some things had been issued many years before. Radiation detection equipment was an item that we had never used but it had been issued.

You loaded your patrol car with all the equipment that had been assigned to you plus all your uniforms. A change of civilian clothes was placed in your patrol car. Then you drive your patrol car to the Highway Patrol Supply Building in Des Moines. You park your patrol car in front of the building and unload all your equipment and place it on the counter. All your uniforms are dumped on the floor behind this counter. I wanted them to count my uniforms to show that I had the proper numbers of summer and winter uniforms. The Supply Officer told me to forget it he
had never seen an officer from post 6 who didn’t have extra uniforms. Most officers acquired extra uniforms over the years. We were issued four summer and winter uniforms.

Each item with a serial number is checked off against your personnel file from Headquarters. Your service revolver is placed on the counter and the serial number check. Next comes the shotgun and after that you remove your shirt badge along with the badge from your hat.

Now that your uniforms and equipment is turned in you have one more item to take care of. That is the uniform you are wearing. You go into the restroom with your civilian clothes and remove your uniform and dress in your civilian clothes. When you come out your patrol car is gone from the front of the building. You’re allowed to keep your patrol shoes.

Lt. Dick Pederson was waiting for me at the door with his patrol car. I climbed in for my return trip to Milford. This is a very emotional time for some officers. I have seen them standing there with tears rolling down there face. Having seen that in the past I was prepared for the occasion.

On our return trip to Milford the Lt. called Storm Lake radio several times to report our location, of which I thought nothing unusual. When we were about seven miles east of Spencer on highway 18 he pulled to the side of the highway and parked. Ahead of us parked on the shoulder was a white Lincoln limousine automobile. I was told I would be riding in the limo the rest of the trip home.

The driver of the limousine was a friend of mine. He told me we were going to stop at the radio station in Spencer before traveling on to Milford. The Radio Station KICD owned the limo and the driver worked for them.

Upon arriving at the station we were met by one of the announcers with a live mike strung out into the parking lot. They did a live interview about my retirement from the patrol. Sgt. Bates and Lt. Pederson were part of the interview. This live interview lasted about 15 minutes.

After the interview the owner of the radio station told me that the driver of the limo was at my discretion for the rest of the evening. He was to pick up my wife, Mavis at our home and we were scheduled for a dinner at the restaurant in the Emporium at Arnold Park, compliments of the radio station. What a memorable day, I will never forget it.

After retiring the protection of a patrol car parked in our driveway was gone. But also a phone ringing did not cause the blood pressure to increase. That was something that you never realized until you retired was the tension of our ringing telephone. Now when it rings it is a friend wanting to talk to someone in our household. No more being called out because of an accident, shift change, appointment changes for talks or other situations involving law enforcement.

**Recruiting for Community College**

After retiring from the Iowa State Patrol in June of 1987 I was a recruiter for the Northwest Iowa Community College for eight years. I covered an area from Sheldon east and southeast in Iowa. I had to call on high schools twice a year and talk to prospective students for our college. This was
a very interesting job. Hated the days when I would call on four schools and not see any students that were interested in our college. Loved it when there were many students interested in our programs at a school when I scheduled my visit. Then I felt like I was going the job that they were paying me to do.

SMOKY MOUNTAIN CENTRAL RAILROAD

About two years after retiring from the patrol I was at the radio station, KICD, talking to some of the staff. When they mentioned that they were looking for someone who could run the model trains display at the Clay County Fair. I said that I could run them. I had watched those trains operate for the past 19 years. The radio station had furnished the patrol a free booth in their building for the past 19 years. From this booth I had watched the trains operate every year. Nothing to it! Little did I know what a job that would turn out to be?

The first day of the fair there were times when all seven of the trains were stopped because they had major problems. Most frustrating job I had ever had in my life. The next day I was at the fair at 6:00 AM when they opened the KICD building. I played with the trains and found out that they should be operated at slower speeds then what we had been operating them the first day of the fair. I had two high school boys helping me and they liked the fast speeds and I did not know any difference. After that they did not have permission to change any speed of a train that I had set. Everything worked great from then on.

In 1999 the old train/KICD building was torn down. A new building had been built next to it at the fair. There were no train tracks laid in the new building the day the old building was ravaged. The work started that day in the new building. There were people working on the building installing electrical wiring and air conditioning. The general contractor was putting the finishing touches on the building while the train tracks were being laid.
The mountain trains were the first tracks to be completed, both the east and west mountain tracks. Work on this display was by the employee’s of radio station KICD. There was no plan or layout as to how the tracks should be installed. Bill Sanders would just say how about placing the tracks here. He would give the guys a rough idea as to where he wanted the tracks and that is where they were laid.

A couple of weeks before this Mr. Bill Sanders asked me if I would install sensors in the tracks and wire up the control panel. I thought that would take about three weeks. Nothing to it! Little did I know at the time that it would take me over three months to get the job done. I started by installing sensors every six feet. The sensor would allow a LED bulb to light up on the control panel when a train passed over the sensor. After installing them every six feet on the first track it was obvious that I would not have enough sensors to complete the job with them installed that close. On future tracks I spaced them up to ten feet apart. That allowed the job to move at a faster pace. At this time I did not know that I was also to design the control panel for the sensors. That year I wired the last sensor in the display control panel the night before the fair started.

The sensors did the job but when the sun would shine into the building it made the sensors inoperative because the sunlight was brighter then the floodlight shining above the sensor. Good idea but needs a little refinement. I can fix the problem by installing a wall of rock blocking out the sun shining on the sensor in the display.
There are 164 sensors installed in the railroad tracks of the display. They are used to show the location of where a train is operating on a track. There are 21 engines operating in the display plus many other interesting displays. Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse, operating ski lift, helicopters, moving airplanes, rotating radar, rotating airport beacon light, oil wells, moving hot air balloon, water wheels, arc welder, smoke emitting from a steel mill chimney, saw mill, Santa and his reindeer, and a revolving café just to mention a few things. There are over 700 pea-sized lights on buildings in the city called Winterville. The display has over 1000 motor vehicles and hundreds of buildings. It also has a 9-hole, par three, golf course.

I have been working on this display since September of 1999 and still not done with all the things that I plan on doing with this display. It needs some fire works in the display but at this time have not figured out just how I am going to make it work. The burning building still needs some work. It needs smoke coming out of the windows of the building.

This is the end of my writings at this time. More will be added later.